

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Sons of Nehemiah:  
Raising the Level of Leadership in Ten Pastor Revitalizers  
of the  
Montgomery Baptist Association

A Thesis Project Submitted to  
the Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

by  
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### **Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

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## THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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There are churches in America seeking vitality through the restorative and refreshing power of the Holy Spirit. The present term of renewal is called “church revitalization.” Each struggling congregation has or is securing a pastor revitalizer. The question many will ask is, “Are these holy shepherds high capacity leaders? Will they lead the church with a compelling vision, a devoted work ethic, a contagious passion, and a kingdom focus based on a community context?” The thesis project researches ten pastor revitalizers from Montgomery, Alabama. The researcher gives them the name *Sons of Nehemiah* to build rapport and accentuate Nehemiah’s biblical value as a role model regarding the above four competencies. The researcher performs applied research on these men and their leadership as well as the churches they serve. He coaches the pastors by leading a six-week lecture series that includes peer dialogue, the examination of books, and online courses conducted by national church revitalization leaders. Also, he exposes the pastors to personal time with national leaders who are contemporary church practitioners. The researcher observes the church members’ comments regarding their church longevity and historical legacy. He collects quantitative data from community demographics and annual church profiles. Research concludes that if ten pastor revitalizers with nominal leadership capacity subject themselves to high-level leadership training, then a higher level of leadership capacity should be the anticipated result. The project proves that these men gain a higher degree of leadership skills and inspiration to lead their churches due to the intensive development efforts.

Thesis project topic abstract length: 250 words

Key words: church revitalization, church replant, pastors, leadership training

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## **Abbreviations**

ALSBOM	<i>Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions</i>
DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
LUSOD	<i>Liberty University School of Divinity</i>
MBA	<i>Montgomery Baptist Association</i>
NAMB	<i>North American Mission Board</i>
SON	<i>Sons of Nehemiah</i>

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The research gathered in this document and thesis examined the results of gathering nominal revitalization leaders. Through proper training and coaching, the effort resulted in developing them to become high capacity pastor revitalizers. The thesis project defined a pastor revitalizer as a pastor shepherd attempting to revitalize or replant the church he is pastoring. The first chapter will review the problem, purpose, and thesis. In summary, they were:

The problem: Many pastors who serve Montgomery congregations that require church revitalization are not seen or expected to be high capacity leaders or trained revitalizers. There are many reasons for the lack of high capacity leaders in church leadership. First, some of the pastor revitalizers come to ministry in their later years of life and are often known to be bi-vocational pastors. They lack the experience of one who may have had an adult career in vocational ministry. Another reason is some of the pastor revitalizers trained only as a shepherd pastor. They have often come to their new task as middle-aged men of God, lacking the church planting knowledge and leadership skills to affect change in a dying culture. Although shepherding the flock is essential to any pastor's work, the lack of other necessary skills as a revitalizer places the shepherd pastor in jeopardy. Third, some pastor revitalizers are unwilling to seek assistance and specific training as a pastor revitalizer. Failure to learn more about the necessary competencies to being a revitalizer leader, such as having a compelling vision, a devoted work ethic, a contagious passion, and a community-based missiology, places both the rookie pastor revitalizer and the struggling congregation toward the danger of church closure.

The purpose: Raise the level of leadership capacity from nominal to exceptional through the training and coaching of ten pastor revitalizers in Montgomery congregations. With assistance through interviews of pastor revitalizers and their churches, along with personal coaching by the researcher and national exposure with revitalization leaders, the researcher increased ten pastor revitalizers' capacity of leadership. The pastor revitalizers gained strong friendships with each other, which became an added benefit of "iron sharpening iron." The Montgomery Baptist Association honored each of the pastors and their churches with an "eagle" award during the annual associational meeting. The *Sons of Nehemiah* grew both in purpose and determination to see their churches revitalized and the glory of God welcomed in their midst.

The thesis: If ten pastor revitalizers with nominal leadership capacity subject themselves to high-level leadership training, then a higher level of leadership capacity in the ten pastor revitalizers should be the anticipated result. When one gives hope with activity and purpose, it is endless what a human soul can accomplish. The pastor revitalizers needed an identity. That is why the researcher named them the *Sons of Nehemiah*. They needed to feel a part of something filled with hope, activity, and purpose. The men learned quickly that this was a pilot project that will continue, with the Lord's help, for generations to come among the Montgomery Baptist Association churches. They needed to be appreciated. That is why Montgomery Baptists awarded them and their congregations with an eagle award to elevate God's divine purpose and human accomplishments. The *Sons of Nehemiah* needed training. That is why the researcher saw that they received the best personal coaching and national exposure to current revitalization leaders. They needed each other. From the beginning, the pastor revitalizers bonded as a "band of brothers" and have pledged the continual learning and fellowship that will grow their capacity

of leadership even higher. The efforts with the *Sons of Nehemiah* accomplished the anticipated result of the thesis.

The researcher believes the church and the pastor revitalizer both received a healthy pattern for church revitalization. The church would have a better assessment tool in their search for an appropriate pastor revitalizer. The pastor revitalizer will move forward to have the skills to help the church and other churches in time. In doing so, God will accomplish a work in the pastor's heart as he replants the church. The church will also see the power of the Lord's resurrection as a new day begins for God's glory and the furtherance of the gospel in their community.<sup>1</sup>

### **Ministry Context**

The Alabama Baptist Association, the first association in Alabama Baptist's history, was founded on December 15, 1819, by four churches: Antioch, Old Elam (also named Elim), Bethel, and Rehoboth.<sup>2</sup> They later became known as the Montgomery Baptist Association (MBA) in 1881. Today, seventy-two churches make up the Central Alabama network of Southern Baptist Christ-followers.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 149.

<sup>2</sup> Gary P. Burton, "The Founding Four Churches: An Overview of Baptist Beginnings in Montgomery County," *The Baptist Historian* (Birmingham, Alabama: The Alabama Baptist Historical Society, 2012), 4.

The Montgomery metroplex has a population of 225,763.<sup>3</sup> The second-largest city in Alabama has a rich history. It is often called “the cradle of the confederacy and the birthplace of civil rights.”<sup>4</sup> The city is considered a mid-size metroplex population of the United States.

The Montgomery Baptist Association is among seventy-five Southern Baptist associations in Alabama, with over 1000 associations located in the United States. One might ask the question, “What is an association?” J.C. Bradley, Southern Baptist historian, states in his book, *A Baptist Association: Churches on Mission Together*, “A Baptist Association is a self-governing fellowship of autonomous churches sharing a common faith and active on mission in their setting.”<sup>5</sup>

Most associations have an associational missionary, sometimes called an associational mission strategist or a director of missions. His job is to be a missionary strategist of his community, a minister to ministers, and a model leader.<sup>6</sup> The Director of Missions of the Montgomery Baptist Association responded in this way with the *Sons of Nehemiah* as he led them through the action research for the thesis project.

The Montgomery Baptist Association consists of seventy-two churches in fellowship with the Alabama Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. Out of the seventy-two congregations, fifty-two are predominantly Anglo churches, and fourteen are African

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<sup>3</sup> Statistics for Montgomery County, Alabama extrapolated from: U.S. Department of Commerce United States Census Bureau, State & County Quick Facts, July 1, 2018.  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/montgomerycountyalabama>, accessed March 18, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> “*City of Montgomery: Capital of Dreams Video*,” Montgomeryal.gov (Archived from the original on June 25, 2014), accessed March 17, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Ray Gentry, *The Baptist Association: Assisting Churches. Advancing the Gospel* (Spring Hill, TN: Rainer Publishing, 2020), 22.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 40.

American churches. There are two Korean churches, one Chinese church, two Hispanic churches, and one church from the Mixtec tribe of Mexico. The MBA has nineteen urban churches, thirty-one suburban churches, nine town and country churches, and thirteen rural churches in the River Region of Central Alabama.

The Montgomery Baptist Association (MBA) exists to serve the Southern Baptist Churches of the River Region of Central Alabama by leading them to make the “gospel above all” their highest order. To accomplish the task, the MBA established three top priorities as their mission, and have built the association budget and strategy around these imperatives.

The first priority in leading MBA churches to make the “gospel above all” is to meet human need and plant gospel seed. In 1997, the MBA created the MBA Community Ministries, Incorporated (MBACM), to assist with grants and other partnerships supporting the broader ministry. The MBACM hosts the following venues: Adoptive/Foster Care, City of Refuge, Conversational English, Disaster Relief, Immigration Outreach, Johnson Center for Family Counseling, Love Loud Montgomery, Love Loud Lowndes County, Love Loud River Region Rolling Store, River Region “Next Steps” Prison Ministry, Samaritan Inn. The ministry effort supports Matthew 25:35-36 and Luke 4:18-19 in their mission.

Priority two in leading MBA churches to make the “gospel above all” is to plant and replant churches for all people in the River Region. The MBA works with the congregations in providing training for sending and supporting churches, prayer walking opportunities, and assessment processes for planters and replanters. The MBA also acts as a catalyst for vacant or soon-to-be vacant church property, as well as church revitalization training. The thesis project has also produced an added ministry for pastor revitalizers called the *Sons of Nehemiah* training school. The MBA has a ministry called “The City of Refuge” for pastors who have lost their way

and need coaching and direction back to God's full purpose in their life. Furthermore, the MBA has a planter care ministry to ensure the planter and his family receive proper attention.

Priority three in leading MBA churches to make the "gospel above all" is to develop and deploy kingdom builders to live their lives on mission across the street and around the world.

The MBA has a studio, creating many virtual training modules and developing strategic social media pages. They are used to equip believers in kingdom living, disciple-making, and missionary sending. Also, the *Great Commission Institute* has been established to train pastors and missionaries, and then deploy them to the River Region of Central Alabama or the world. This is in partnership with the Alabama Baptist State Convention, as well as NAMB and the IMB.

Neal Hughes has been the Director of Missions of the Montgomery Baptist Association since 2016. He came to Montgomery from the North American Mission Board, where he retired as an SBC missionary before joining the MBA staff. Neal is also a trustee with the Southern Baptist Executive Committee. Having pastored and served as a denominational servant since 1976, he has much experience in church revitalization, church planting, and replanting. Hughes is presently a DMin Candidate at Liberty University's John W. Rawlings School of Divinity and is the researcher of this thesis project.

### **Problem Presented**

The problem this project will address is that many pastors who serve Montgomery congregations that require church revitalization are not known or expected to be high capacity leaders or trained revitalizers. The Montgomery Baptist Association has seventy-two churches. Seventeen congregations are under careful observation for revitalization purposes. When MBA churches are looking for pastors to lead through dire times, many higher capacity leaders have



deferred to larger urban environments. Such a decision has often led congregations to accept great shepherd leaders, of which many are untrained in church revitalization. The team chose to search not in whom they could invest but whom they could afford. Further, they typically recruit only those willing to come to their struggling community rather than praying expectantly and adhering to their core values first established in the pastor search.

Many of the leaders who come to pastor a church in Montgomery do not have any church revitalization training or certification. They are considered good shepherds, but their general church planting leadership skills are often lacking. In particular, research shows that some struggle with the lack of compelling vision, a devoted work ethic, a contagious passion, and a strong kingdom focus with ministry context. The lack of such skills often lead to a pastor's incompetency issue, resulting in division, distraction, and depression to the biblical community and pastor.

Sadly, the untrained pastor's tenure of a church in revitalization is typically under two years, never arriving at the five-year mark for change that Davis mentions in his book, *Revitalize*.<sup>7</sup> Brian Croft also comments on the same period in *Biblical Church Revitalization*.<sup>8</sup> Both authors and the researcher's personal experience understand that it takes time for change to occur. People process differently. Central Alabama is also a place where "slow" is a southern tradition. It is tragic for both the leader and the church that the pastor revitalizer often does not understand this principle. His lack of patience and perseverance sometimes causes premature resignation and, in some cases, termination.

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<sup>7</sup> Andrew Davis, *Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), 30.

<sup>8</sup> Brian Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization: Solutions for Dying and Divided Churches* (Rossshire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2016), 34.

## **Purpose Statement**

The Doctor of Ministry study's purpose was to develop ten pastor revitalizers of nominal leadership capacity serving in Montgomery congregations that require church revitalization. The Director of Missions placed them in high capacity leadership coaching and revitalizer environments provided by the Montgomery Baptist Association and the Alabama Baptist Convention. Church revitalization laboratories with high capacity leaders from national replant networks became an affirmative connection (i.e., ALSBOM, NAMB, RENOVATE, etc.). These two competencies helped raise their leadership capacity from nominal (scale 2/3 on a 1-5 margin) to exceptional (scale 4/5 on a 1-5 margin).

It is the objective of the Montgomery Baptist Association to assist the churches with successful opportunities that lead to life from the Holy Spirit. From the revitalization of the pastor, which will necessitate the fundamentals of the preaching of God's Word as well as the work of the Holy Spirit, the Lord instilled hope in the established congregation who desires to see the family of Christ-followers thrive and revive, thus restoring a declining, dying church.<sup>9</sup>

## **Basic Assumptions**

Many underlying assumptions come with the thesis project. First, one had to assume that the ten pastor revitalizers who participated in the project stayed at the church for the research tenure. Second, one had to think that each of the ten pastor revitalizers who participated in the project shared a sense of cooperation, eagerness, and participation in the trials. Third, one had to assume that all ten pastor revitalizers understood that they struggle with at least one of the four competencies identified for high-level leadership: a compelling vision, a devoted work ethic, a

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<sup>9</sup> Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live? A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 2.

contagious passion, and a community missiology strategy within their church context. Fourth, one had to understand that there would not be an exaggeration of the data gathered through action research with the ten pastor revitalizers. The virtues of truth, honesty, and humility would be the hallmark of the thesis project.

Regarding the coaching of the pastor revitalizers, one had to assume that the researcher and his team would be of good health, but that some new and unforeseen issue might interfere with the timely development of action research. Second, one had to think that the national leaders would also be able and willing to participate fully in the project to its very end. Third, one assumed that nothing like a pandemic or other world crisis would interfere with events the researcher intended for his pastor revitalizer students to participate (i.e., revitalization conferences, replant conferences, etc.).

Finally, one had to assume that the researcher's plan to utilize Nehemiah's leadership principles as a biblical coaching tool would be the best biblical resource for the thesis project. To illustrate, this biblical leader chose to fast and pray for several days before taking steps to lead change. In doing so, Nehemiah lead with the wisdom, strength, and courage of God.<sup>10</sup> When the servant spoke, he spoke decisively, told the truth, and always brought his followers to the attention of God's might and strength. One revitalizer Scripture example would be: "Then I said to them, 'You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.' I also

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<sup>10</sup> Thom Rainer, *Who Moved My Pulpit? Leading Change in The Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 33.

told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, ‘Let us start rebuilding.’ So they began this good work” (Nehemiah 2:17-18 NIV).<sup>11</sup>

### Definitions

The research document will see two dominant terms in the thesis project: *church revitalization* and *church replant*. The term *church revitalization* describes the hope and the intent to help a church that is plateaued and/or declining, resulting in a more unified, vibrant, disciple-making congregation for the glory of God and His mission.<sup>12</sup> Jesus wants to breathe new life into a church. Over a season of time, the dying church has most likely found themselves with minimum congregants and a declining budget. Yet with faith and expectation, they pray to see the established church thrive and revive. In every way, these believers hope that the Lord will bring restoration to the place they call “church.”<sup>13</sup>

The term *replant* defines a specific strategy of church revitalization. In searching for ways to revitalize the dying church, the congregation often finds the best plan is to yield the properties and leadership to an outside sending church and its leadership, or their local association. Together, they will work to begin another congregation, often with a different name, for a new season of gospel ministry in their community.”<sup>14</sup> The term *legacy church* reflects the original body of believers who own the facility and are often known as the governing body.

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<sup>11</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture in the thesis project will be: *The Holy Bible*, New International Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan House, 1984), Print.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Hallock, *Replant Roadmap: How Your Congregation Can Help Revitalize Dying Churches* (Littleton, CO: Acoma Press, 2017), 26.

<sup>13</sup> Henard, *Can These Bones Live? A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Hallock, *Replant Roadmap*, 26.

Also, the thesis has utilized other terms to support the church revitalization role. One such term, *mission*, is seen as a kingdom plan, where God's purpose is to use His people to reconcile a lost world to Himself.<sup>15</sup> In essence, believers live their lives "on mission" for Christ Jesus. They serve the Lord as they serve others, wherever they live, work, or play.

Another term, *pastor revitalizer*, describes a pastor who guides the next steps of church revitalization as the senior leader. He may choose to use a *church revitalization team* (another term) to carry out his mission. The team of leaders support the new work and plan that God has given to the pastor revitalizer and his congregation. They would use their best effort to create a person-changing, community-changing, world-changing, transformational church for the glory of God.<sup>16</sup>

The term *high capacity leader* accentuates a pastor revitalizer's ambience who excels as a church leader, utilizing his revitalization skills as one with a compelling vision, a devoted work ethic, a contagious passion, and a kingdom focus that has a community context. The term *sending church* is the lead supporting congregation who helps the new or replanted church become an autonomous congregation that is self-sustaining, self-governing, and self-propagating. They are often the lead church in inviting other like-minded believers, sometimes called *supporting churches*, to join them in praying for, participating with, and providing for the new work.

The term *association* is defined mostly in light of the Southern Baptist context as a network of geographically and/or affinity-related churches that are considered part of the

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<sup>15</sup> Bob Burton, *The Spiritual DNA of a Church on Mission: Rediscovering the 1st Century Church for 21st Century Spiritual Awakening* (Nashville, TN: Wordsearch Academic-An Imprint of B&H Academic, 2020), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Jeff Iorg, *The Case For Antioch: A Biblical Model for a Transformational Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 191.

Southern Baptist Convention's expression and doctrine. It is often the tradition for the struggling southern congregation to look first to the association for wisdom, clarity, and next steps regarding the revitalization or the replanting of their church. The outreach reflects the ongoing relationships between the congregation and the Director of Missions. He has already been guiding the pastor and people through difficult times of change and discovery.

Finally, there are a few acronyms that require explanation. *IMB* stands for the International Mission Board, Southern Baptist's international missions agency. *NAMB* stands for the North American Mission Board, Southern Baptist's domestic missions agency. *ALSBOM* stands for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, which serves the congregations who make up the Alabama Baptist Convention. *RENOVATE* is the term used to define the church revitalization ministry of the Greater Orlando Baptist Association. *MBA* stands for the Montgomery Baptist Association. *MBACM* stands for the MBA Community Ministries, Incorporated. *S.M.A.R.T.* goals reflect the terms: s-trategic, m-easurable, a-ttainable, r-ealistic, and t-imely.

### **Limitations**

The most significant limitation of the thesis project was working around the issues brought about by the global pandemic of the coronavirus (COVID-19). The predictions of the imminent disaster produced a trajectory of medical tragedy and economic collapse. These two factors were out of the control of the researcher. Still, there was a potential that it could affect the conclusion of the project due to the potential failing health of Liberty faculty, including the researcher's mentor. The pandemic could also affect the researcher's health or someone close to his family, which could have resulted in the project's postponement.

The potential economic collapse due to the pandemic was also a factor in the sustainability of Liberty University. It also had the potential of affecting the livelihoods and possible layoffs of the school's faculty. These issues would ensue a struggle to complete the project without the appropriate academic supervision.

The pandemic could have caused limited to no access to certain events that require a mass assembly, of which these gatherings were part of the project's coaching section. Also, if the library closed, not allowing physical access because of the risk of exposure to the COVID-19 would be a factor if one could not find the required materials online. Finally, the pandemic could have affected the thesis's actual publishing in proper academic fashion because of businesses' closures that produce such printing binders.

The pandemic could have caused a re-shifting of the direction of the thesis project. Earlier in the thesis, the researcher mentioned seventeen out of seventy-two churches in need of church revitalization in the Montgomery Baptist Association. Many national revitalizers now suggest that all congregations are experiencing a need for renewal and revitalization because of the pandemic's weariness upon the church's life. Though this may be marginally true in Montgomery, the researcher still contends there are only seventeen churches in the Association that are at risk of closing in the next five years if intervention does not take place.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the physical health and the emotional well-being of thousands of Americans. The long-term "shelter in place" has created unemployment rates as high as the days of the great depression. Further, racial violence and strife have affected all of America, with the burning of towns and the emotional conflict and violence created on urban streets and suburban communities. These physiological, sociological, and economic issues could have caused limitations due to distractions from a reasonable standard of living.

Though the pandemic and these supporting factors presented possible limitations to completing the project, the researcher intended to lead through any issue in front of him with positive pursuit. In many ways, the limitations created a great church revitalization laboratory, as all churches have to recreate and establish a new day for themselves after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The researcher's purpose was to carry out the work in an orderly, flexible, and creative fashion, seeking an appropriate time for the thesis defense. These external limitations were feasible, though not qualified. Simultaneously, as a man of faith, the Lord helped the researcher see the project through to the end.

### **Delimitations**

Some of the delimitations were central to action research. The Montgomery Baptist Association (MBA) has seventy-two churches. Their geographically defined lines include Montgomery County, Elmore County, and Lowndes County. It would have been unwise and disrespectful to the researcher's colleagues if he attempted to equip pastors in areas other than the MBA into the project, unless given advanced permission and blessing.

The ten pastor revitalizers needed for the project were Southern Baptist or National Baptist leaders. Though the researcher has enormous respect for kingdom work, the project's intent sought to benefit the Baptist pastor revitalizer's leadership capacity. In being a good steward of time and resources, the researcher, who is also the Director of Missions for the MBA, felt the association should be close to the researcher's denominational tribe with the problem, purpose, and thesis.

Most of the research was in the deep South and the state of Alabama. The data gathered, the theory of action research, and the environment that has been dictated by a rich culture for



generations produced a unique qualifier to a regionally defined thesis. It would have been difficult to have anyone in the project that did not have a strong understanding of the River Region of Central Alabama. Southern culture played a huge factor in the outlying strategy of leadership coaching, especially in their context. Finally, Montgomery is a mid-size population. The research chose not to reflect anything about megacities or megapolis regions. The context of the Southern United States of America was the main focus.

### **Thesis Statement**

If ten pastor revitalizers with nominal leadership capacity (scale 2/3 on a 1-5 margin) subject themselves to high-level leadership training, which focuses on such skill improvements as having a more compelling vision, a devoted work ethic, a contagious passion, and a kingdom focus that has a community missiology strategy within their church context, then a higher level of leadership capacity (scale 4/5 on a 1-5 margin) in the ten pastor revitalizers should be the anticipated result.

Suppose the pastor revitalizer did not see his leadership rise due to proper coaching and exposure to other models. In that case, he might need to reevaluate whether another pastor model suits him best. As a whole, the team of ten understood that being a revitalizer requires gifts and skills that are both a mixture of church planting and pastoring.<sup>17</sup> After the research study, it will be a good time for the revitalizer to be true to himself. If necessary, he should recognize a need to change from his present assignment if the training received does not lead to a higher leadership and passion capacity as a pastor revitalizer. The Director of Missions can assist him in processing his next steps.

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<sup>17</sup> Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 118.

The pastor revitalizer who humbly processed through the project and gained a new vision and courage, became the real hero in the storyline of church revitalization. His leadership skills development affected both the church and the Lord's servant as the shepherd of God's flock. The Holy Spirit empowered leaders with spiritual giftedness to build up the body of Christ. In the strength of the heavenly dove, the pastor revitalizer's goal will always be to reclaim God's glory.<sup>18</sup>

The church also benefited from the research thesis. From the learnings gleaned from their pastor, they began to understand church revitalization principles in a more discerning way. They have become better readers of revitalization literature and watch for regional success models. They now know how important it is to follow the imperatives from Clifton's *Reclaiming Glory* regarding church revitalization. They learned to: (1) pray without ceasing; (2) love the church's remaining members; (3) exegete the community; (4) simplify the strategy; (5) focus on reaching young men; (6) make disciples who make disciples.<sup>19</sup>

Simultaneously, the pastor revitalizer and people realized they were in the middle of the most significant opportunity the Lord has ever given them. These *Sons of Nehemiah* were being used as a tool to bring "new life" back into a dying church. In turn, they have reclaimed ground for God's glory with the reclaiming of His church, carried on a legacy of discipleship, and prioritized sharing redeeming love to their community with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the prayer of this Director of Missions that the impact of the DMin project will make a lasting

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<sup>18</sup> B. A. DeVries, *Spiritual Gifts for Biblical Church Growth* (In Die Skriflig, 2016, 50(1), 1-10. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.4102/ids.v50i1.2090>), 4.

<sup>19</sup> Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 53.

impact in the River Region of Central Alabama, and perhaps become a model for other associations in North America.

## Chapter 2

### Conceptual Framework

Chapter two includes a literature review that expands on church revitalization and the pastor revitalizer, as discussed in the thesis project proposal. It explains the five themes found in the majority of the literature. The project's theological and theoretical foundations reflect the life of Nehemiah and his role in revitalizer leadership. It also demonstrates the qualities of qualitative and quantitative research in the thesis project.

### Literature Review

#### Theme One: The Truth About Dying and Declining Churches

Many revitalization scholars acknowledge that statistics reflect churches dying at an average of 1000 a year. Clifton, Replant Director for the North American Mission Board of the SBC, states that 900 churches disappear from their statistical roles every year.<sup>20</sup> Blackaby also acknowledges that 900 SBC churches are closing annually.<sup>21</sup> McIntosh says that roughly three-fourths of established churches in America are on the decline.<sup>22</sup> Etheridge makes a daring move and reflects that more than 4000 churches close their doors each year.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Mark Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Flickering Lamps: Christ and His Church* (Jonesboro, GA: Blackaby Ministries International, 2015), 14.

<sup>22</sup> Gary L. McIntosh, *There's Hope for Your Church: First Steps to Restoring Health and Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 20.

<sup>23</sup> Craig Etheredge, *Bold Moves: Lead the Church to Live Like Jesus* (Colleyville, TX: Disciple First, 2016), 7.

Other scholars acknowledge the decline of churches in America. Kelley summarizes the Southern Baptist Convention in three words: growth, plateau, and decline.<sup>24</sup> Blackaby concludes that roughly 70% of congregations are currently plateaued or declining.<sup>25</sup> Davis admits that many congregations in America are dying (or already dead).<sup>26</sup> Kricher reports Barna's findings by confirming that the United States has seen a significant decline during the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>27</sup> Even the Koreans state that Protestant Christianity in their country is on a downward trend.<sup>28</sup> Mohler quotes President Kevin Ezell from the North American Mission Board, saying that some churches need to die, noting they have outlived their purpose.<sup>29</sup> Ogea states in a 2015 report that there was not a state in the union that church attendance kept up with population growth.<sup>30</sup> Cheyney concurs by saying that believers live in a day where everything is growing except the church where one attends.<sup>31</sup>

Many leaders speak of the decline in the church of America as a spiritual crisis. Kelley says that the Southern Baptist Convention is in the sixteenth year of the most prolonged decline in baptisms in its history.<sup>32</sup> Hallock points out how church leaders are wrestling with such

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<sup>24</sup> Chuck Kelley, *Fuel the Fire: Lessons from the History of Southern Baptist Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2018), 4.

<sup>25</sup> Blackaby and Blackaby, *Flickering Lamps*, 71.

<sup>26</sup> Davis, *Revitalize*, 30.

<sup>27</sup> Lee Kricher, *For A New Generation: A Practical Guide for Revitalizing Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 32.

<sup>28</sup> Son, A., "Crisis of Church Decline In and Revitalization of Korean Churches," *Pastoral Psychology*, 67(5), 569-577. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s11089-018-0803-7>, 2018, 569.

<sup>29</sup> Albert R. Mohler, Jr., Editor, *A Guide to Church Revitalization: Guide Book No. 005* (Louisville, KY: SBTs Press, 2015), 14.

<sup>30</sup> Reggie R. Ogea, "Critical Issues in Church Revitalization," Edited by J. Kent Edwards, *The Journal of Christian Ministry* (The Association for Doctor of Ministry Education, 2015), 5.

<sup>31</sup> Tom Cheyney, *Slaying the Dragons of Church Revitalization* (Orlando, FL: Renovate Publishing Group, 2017), 9.

spiritual questions regarding their declining church, making statements like, “Is there any hope?” and “Is God done with us?”<sup>33</sup> Henard reflects the Old Testament question, “Can these bones live? Only God knows.”<sup>34</sup> DeVries admits that there will be no evangelical repentance or personal regeneration and church revitalization without the Spirit’s work of conviction.<sup>35</sup> Hirsch acknowledges fault in the profoundly immature in Christ of the American church.<sup>36</sup>

Even with the decline's reality, many authors acknowledge the hope and breath of God in any church struggle. Croft points out that God has the power to do the impossible, even raise the dead.<sup>37</sup> Burton points to a rediscovery and fresh application of the Holy Spirit's acts as found in the Bible.<sup>38</sup> Iorg uses the illustration of Antioch of a church that all should aspire to model.<sup>39</sup> Clifton invites the church to seek the Lord and His plan above all else.<sup>40</sup> Caldwell speaks of the early American Baptists united around religious liberty and believers baptism by immersion.<sup>41</sup> It was their revival theology that invited them to the struggle for the breath of God.

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<sup>32</sup> Kelley, *Fuel the Fire*, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Hallock, *Replant Roadmap*, 15.

<sup>34</sup> Henard, *Can These Bones Live*, 2.

<sup>35</sup> DeVries, B. A., *Divine Empowerment: The Holy Spirit and Church Revitalization*/Godelike bemagtiging: Die heilige gees en kerkherstel. In *Die Skriflig*, 49(1), 1-8.  
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.4102/ids.v49i1.1955>, 2015, 5.

<sup>36</sup> Alan Hirsch, *5Q: Reactivating the Original Intelligence and Capacity of the Body of Christ* (100movements.com, 2017), 28.

<sup>37</sup> Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization*, 24.

<sup>38</sup> Bob Burton, *The Spiritual DNA of a Church on Mission: Rediscovering the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Spiritual Awakening* (Nashville, TN: Wordsearch Academic, 2020), 7.

<sup>39</sup> Iorg, *The Case for Antioch*, 6.

<sup>40</sup> Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 30.

<sup>41</sup> Robert W. Caldwell III, *Theologies of the American Revivalists: From Whitfield to Finney* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 162.

## Theme Two: The Revitalized Church and God's Glory

To bring God glory is the ultimate goal for any church and any Christian. The authors of church revitalization agree. Clifton commented that more than fifty times, the Bible reflects the creation of mankind for His glory.<sup>42</sup> Kelley laments with the truth that a day will come where we will weep as God's glory has departed from the Southern Baptist Convention.<sup>43</sup> Burton joined in the chorus by quoting Psalms 96:7-9, ascribing to the Lord His glory.<sup>44</sup>

People are hungry for the life-giving gospel. People in the church are some of those hungry people. In commenting about the gospel movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Brown notes that villages throughout England welcomed the revival message of a transforming gospel.<sup>45</sup> DeVries brings attention to Peter Wagner's testimony of the 1970s. Wagner notes that the Lord moved beyond creeds and theologies to people having a personal experience with the Holy Spirit's work, manifesting the "rediscovery" of spiritual gifts.<sup>46</sup> Hirsch agrees with DeVries and Brown. He reflects on the recent 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. In those days, people were hungry for change and new life in Christ. They called the day *Semper Reformanda*, or the church "always reforming."<sup>47</sup> Rainer says the New Testament is an action story, where the gospel is

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<sup>42</sup> Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 17.

<sup>43</sup> Kelley, *Fuel the Fire*, 188.

<sup>44</sup> Burton, *The Spiritual DNA of a Church on Mission*, 8.

<sup>45</sup> Raymond Brown, "Church Planting in the Evangelical Revival a Cambridgeshire Baptist Perspective," *Baptist Quarterly*, (2016) 47:3, 95-109, DOI: 10.1080/0005576X.2016.1156860, 96.

<sup>46</sup> DeVries, "Spiritual Gifts for Biblical Church Growth," 1.

<sup>47</sup> Hirsch, *5Q: Reactivating the Original Intelligence and Capacity of the Body of Christ*, 24.

moving forward.<sup>48</sup> Hallock says the church that is seeking to replant is praying this prayer, “Lord, we want to do whatever it takes to not simply survive, but thrive for the sake of the gospel, for the sake of this community.”<sup>49</sup>

Many revitalization authors agree the source of church revitalization is the power, will, and sovereign favor of God. Davis acknowledges that renewal only occurs when God restores a once healthy church.<sup>50</sup> Croft agrees that God is the only One who can breathe life where there is no life.<sup>51</sup> DeVries concurs that church revitalization only begins as the Holy Spirit's work in the life of the congregation.<sup>52</sup>

### Theme Three: Metrics, Goals, and Success in Church Revitalization

Church revitalization has to have a deliverable. Can one describe success? What are the goals and metrics to govern them? How long will it take to get there? There is a gap of research regarding specific literature related to S.M.A.R.T. (Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely) goals. However, there are scholarly responses regarding Biblical truth and Biblical metrics (i.e., the Great Commission). One's attendance is often dictated by the community, making it a challenging metric. An example would be Henslee and Bueermann stating that rural churches under 250 are not small but normal.<sup>53</sup> Most of their rural communities are not that large in population.

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<sup>48</sup> Thom S. Rainer, *Who Moved My Pulpit? Leading Change in the Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 27.

<sup>49</sup> Hallock, *Replant Roadmap*, 27.

<sup>50</sup> Davis, *Revitalize*, 30.

<sup>51</sup> Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization*, 26.

<sup>52</sup> B. A. DeVries, “Divine Empowerment,” 2.

<sup>53</sup> Matt Henslee and Kyle Bueermann, *Replanting Rural Churches: God's Plan and Call for the Middle of Nowhere* (Littleton, CO: Acoma Press, 2019), 25.



The Great Commission is a theme for many regarding a perfect metric for church revitalization. Many congregations have abandoned any intentional plan to “go and make disciples.” Several authors addressed the crisis. Clifton regarded the only metric that matters is the Great Commission.<sup>54</sup> Kelley admonished the church to set goals for how many people they would want to win for Christ and how many baptisms they would like seen in a year.<sup>55</sup> Brown records how they measured their success in Cambridge by how many barns hosted their meeting house to preach the gospel.<sup>56</sup> Iorg challenged the church to understand the primary way to glorify God is to keep the ultimate outcome, the fulfillment of God’s mission, at the forefront of all the goals.<sup>57</sup>

Wilson challenges the metric of the Great Commission. In his research of the book of Acts, he concludes that it is not by the activity of going or by some demonstration of worship and music, but instead by Pentecost's work that continues with Peter’s proclamation of Christ's supremacy.<sup>58</sup> In short, Wilson says that the preaching of Christ is the most critical metric. In his book, he states how powerful the preaching of the Word is and how the early believers centered on the Word of God, resulting in the communal witness of the gospel. Blackaby concurs with Wilson, stating that the key to a thriving church is keeping Christ the center of everything.<sup>59</sup> Christ being the center of everything will lead to one being obedient to the Lord’s Great

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<sup>54</sup> Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 112.

<sup>55</sup> Kelley, *Fuel the Fire*, 206.

<sup>56</sup> Raymond Brown, “Church Planting in the Evangelical Revival a Cambridgeshire Baptist Perspective,” *Baptist Quarterly*, 101.

<sup>57</sup> Jeff Iorg, *Leading Major Change in Your Ministry* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2018), 215.

<sup>58</sup> Jared Wilson, *The Prodigal Church: A Gentle Manifesto against the Status Quo* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 69.

<sup>59</sup> Blackaby, *Flickering Lamps*, 124.

Commission, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Interestingly, out of twenty reviews of literature searching for success metrics, only Henard cited prayer as the fundamental to achieving the deliverable of a revitalized church. He equated prayer with holy desperation and active faith. Henard further states that this kind of spirit is what attracts God. He challenged the pastor to be desperate, honest, and faithful in their prayer life.<sup>60</sup> According to Henard, it is the only metric that matters.

Three of the authors placed the success measurement into programming. Kricher states the worship service and its excellence as the key to success.<sup>61</sup> McIntosh says that it is wise choices and faithfulness to this choice that is the measure of success.<sup>62</sup> Iorg calls for empirical data (consistent quantitative and qualitative analyses) as essential to create an accurate picture of the church’s condition and ultimate success in revitalization.<sup>63</sup> Malphurs states that any strategic planning will bring about a turnaround in the state of the church.<sup>64</sup>

In examining the sources for the literature review, in the researcher’s opinion, the theme concludes that the full measure of success for the Great Commission's spiritual quest and one’s metrical commitment to excellence will be a high capacity leader. The leader would have a

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<sup>60</sup> Henard, *Can These Bones Live*, 16.

<sup>61</sup> Lee Kricher, *For A New Generation*, 45.

<sup>62</sup> Gary L. McIntosh, *There’s Hope for Your Church*, 163.

<sup>63</sup> Iorg, *The Case for Antioch*, 27.

<sup>64</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 23.

compelling vision, a devoted work ethic, contagious passion, and a kingdom focus with a community missiology that leads to S.M.A.R.T. (strategic, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely) outward-focused goals. The leader will become more strategic, leading through the lens of how the church can best help their community in Jesus' name. The leader will lead his church toward measurable goals centered and flowing from the Great Commission. Finally, the leader will have plans focused on strategic, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely goals.

#### Theme Four: Missiological Imperatives in Church Revitalization

Every book on church revitalization placed in the literature review has many imperatives regarding how to move a congregation from the beginning of the process to a successful victory. Prayer was the top imperative of all the lists. Prayer will be the center in every part of the thesis project. Every book examined also reflected holy desperation for God to make Himself known. The findings emphasize that church revitalization is a spiritual quest and that if the Lord does not manifest Himself, all man-made efforts are irrelevant.

Out of six replanting imperatives, Clifton ranked praying without ceasing as the highest priority.<sup>65</sup> Kelley agreed with a focus on prayer as the starting point in reaching the community.<sup>66</sup> Blackaby invites the reader to seek first the kingdom of God in prayer.<sup>67</sup> Davis instructs the learner to saturate the church in prayer.<sup>68</sup> Henard summarizes a pastor's role in church revitalization: preach, evangelize, pastor, and pray.<sup>69</sup> Burton invites the church and their leaders

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<sup>65</sup> Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 53.

<sup>66</sup> Kelley, *Fuel the Fire*, 206.

<sup>67</sup> Blackaby, *Flickering Lamps*, 32.

<sup>68</sup> Davis, *Revitalize*, 47.

<sup>69</sup> Henard, *Can These Bones Live*, 68.

to a season of spiritual preparation by praying and expecting God to work.<sup>70</sup> Rainer says if one is to lead in the change, he must first stop and pray. He further calls it the critical foundation to all the imperatives of church revitalization.<sup>71</sup> DeVries acknowledges man's dependence on the Holy Spirit, and through prayer and faith, one discovers the competence to carry on the work. He further states that believers are bound to these sovereign means.<sup>72</sup> Gay states servant leadership centered on prayer is paramount to a pattern for success in the revitalization of kingdom communities.<sup>73</sup> He uses King Rehoboam as an example, "If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants" (1 Kgs 12:7).

Wilson identifies a significant struggle in "pragmatic lists" among imperatives. He reflects the narrative from Luke 8:5-8, where the sower sows the seed and brings out that the sower was faithful to his work, although he planted indiscriminately. Wilson cautions that the "pragmatic spirit" is a danger zone to the church in revitalization. This spirit would hinder the sower toward more strategy leading to the success of church revitalization. He joins other leaders like Mark Dever in saying the utilitarian ethos is by its very nature unspiritual. Dever goes on to say that pragmatism is the greatest threat to the gospel specific among evangelicals.<sup>74</sup>

It should be noted that pragmatism should not be considered a synonym for intentional focus. Jesus showed measurable pragmatism in developing certain groups (i.e., Peter, the inner

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<sup>70</sup> Burton, *The Spiritual DNA of a Church on Mission*, 5.

<sup>71</sup> Rainer, *Who Moved My Pulpit*, 25.

<sup>72</sup> DeVries, "Divine Empowerment," 4.

<sup>73</sup> Larry and Susan Gay, *The Servant-Steward's Handbook: A Practical Guide to Effective Leadership and Supervision in Business or Ministry* (Montgomery, AL: Lead360, LLC, 2019), 10.

<sup>74</sup> Wilson, *The Prodigal Church*, 52.

three, the twelve, the seventy, the multitude, etc.). These groups reflect a strategic side to Jesus and how he organized a plan to carry out his mission.

Both Clifton and Davis recognize the value of developing and establishing young men as disciples of Christ.<sup>75</sup> Clifton goes further by acknowledging these men as the future leaders of the new church. He amplifies a sense of emergency toward a discipleship call of these younger citizens of the kingdom.<sup>76</sup>

Clifton, in the researcher's opinion, has the most practical list of imperatives that summarizes many of the other listings: 1) Pray without ceasing; 2) Love the church's remaining members; 3) Exegete the community; 4) Simplify the strategy; 5) Focus on reaching young men; 6) Make disciples who make disciples.<sup>77</sup> Clifton used his tenure as pastor of the Wornall Baptist Church in Kansas City, Kansas, to test his data and research (2005-2015).

#### Theme Five: Qualities of a Church Revitalizer

The problem presented reflects the researcher's project's purpose and thesis because many pastors who serve Montgomery congregations that require church revitalization are not known or expected to be high capacity leaders or trained revitalizers. Theme Five gives a solid overview of the nature of the problem. Though there is enough material in the current literature on leadership, there appears to be a gap in the training and coaching of high capacity leaders for church revitalization. The research and the researcher will attempt to close the gap.

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<sup>75</sup> Davis, *Revitalize*, 4.

<sup>76</sup> Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 55.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

Vision is ranked as a top qualification for a pastor/revitalizer in several church revitalization books in the literature review. Clifton cites the need for high capacity leaders who are visionary shepherds.<sup>78</sup> Davis asks the question of why a visionary leader should give his best years to a dying church? His first answer among ten responses is to bring God glory by doing something difficult for the kingdom.<sup>79</sup> NAMB also acknowledges visionary leadership as a key to church revitalization.<sup>80</sup> Hallock ranks visionary shepherding as the first of eight essential characteristics of a replanter.<sup>81</sup> Hirsch calls visionary leadership as “having soft eyes.” He explains that life issues harden many hearts but that soft eyes must look beyond what has become familiar.<sup>82</sup> Iorg states the change leader must take the responsibility to have a vision for the church.<sup>83</sup> Intentional change and compelling vision go hand in hand.

Many of the authors agree that the church revitalizer/pastor will require high pain tolerance. Clifton states although the replanter will love his membership, pain is inevitable in the process of change.<sup>84</sup> Blackaby speaks of the church enduring pain and division. The congregation’s greatest need at that time is leadership.<sup>85</sup> Hallock calls it the “capacity for suffering.”<sup>86</sup> Son suggests that the church experiences pain because of the corruption and

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<sup>78</sup> Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 119.

<sup>79</sup> Davis, *Revitalize*, 34.

<sup>80</sup> Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization*, 34.

<sup>81</sup> Hallock, *Replant Roadmap*, 101.

<sup>82</sup> Hirsch, *5Q: Reactivating the Intelligence and Capacity of the Body of Christ*, 21.

<sup>83</sup> Iorg, *Leading Major Change in Your Ministry*, 99.

<sup>84</sup> Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory*, 117.

<sup>85</sup> Blackaby, *Flickering Lamps*, 103.

<sup>86</sup> Hallock, *Replant Roadmap*, 102.

immaturity of the leader.<sup>87</sup> Brown notes history's account in Cambridge, where the Christ-followers refused the "Oath of Allegiance" and participated as dissenters worshiping in local barns.<sup>88</sup> The dark night of pain and persecution is often the roadway to a brighter tomorrow.

Bickford and Hallock speak of the characteristics of a pastor revitalizer with thirty questions. Such qualities unique to their co-authored book are questions such as does the replanter root for the underdog?<sup>89</sup> To them, the pastor revitalizer has the attitude that God can do something unique, even in a dying church. Another quality is the replanter genuinely and passionately loves people.<sup>90</sup> People in a dying church may have a history of seeming peculiar, but the pastor revitalizer cherishes them as a gift from heaven. He radically loves and cares for them. Another quality is the pastor revitalizer's ability to live their life on mission. Charles Spurgeon once said, "Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter."<sup>91</sup> Bickford and Hallock state that though the pastor would have the heart of a shepherd, the revitalizer has a missionary lifestyle and is a developer of other missionaries.

Two quotes reflect the quality of a leader. Kelley asks who is developing and driving a strategy for reaching the lost in a community. He illustrates with this adage, "Without a gardener,

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<sup>87</sup> A. Son, "Crisis of Church Decline In and Revitalization of Korean Churches," *Pastoral Psychology*, 67(5), 569-577. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/s11089-018-0803-7>, 2018. P, 575.

<sup>88</sup> Raymond Brown, "Church Planting in the Evangelical Revival a Cambridgeshire Baptist Perspective," *Baptist Quarterly*, 99.

<sup>89</sup> Bob Bickford and Mark Hallock, *Am I a Replanter? Thirty Days of Discerning God's Will* (Littleton, CO: Acoma Press, 2017), 25.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>91</sup> Bickford and Hallock, *Am I a Replanter*, 141.

there can be no garden.<sup>92</sup> McIntosh speaks of the new leader who brings fresh energy to the church. He says, “A new broom sweeps clean.”<sup>93</sup>

### Conclusion

The five themes in the literary review reflect an effort to answer the problem presented: The problem is that many pastors who serve Montgomery congregations that require church revitalization are not known or expected to be high capacity leaders or trained revitalizers. They must first understand the disparity between a dying church and a living church. They must have a firm conviction as to the vision of success. They must have a cognitive grasp of the fundamental principles of change and church revitalization. They must also examine themselves to determine the kind of leader they are at present and visualize what they can be in the future with appropriate coaching and assistance.

The project supported the literary review with a pragmatic plan to exercise personal coaching and national influence into the lives of ten church revitalizers in the River Region of Central Alabama. The literary review suggests that with the Holy Spirit’s empowerment, these men will go from level three to level five leaders. The two gaps examined in the paper hope to utilize research to bring to church revitalization, more examination of S.M.A.R.T. goals in achieving the necessary metrics for success. Also, there is a gap in the literature that speaks to leaders' training and development for church revitalization. The project examined the gap.

Further, there is a literature gap regarding events that are happening in real-time that scholarly research has not yet had an opportunity to reflect on how these matters will impact the local church and her need for revitalization. The medical pandemic, commonly known as

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<sup>92</sup> Kelley, *Fuel the Fire*, 7.

<sup>93</sup> McIntosh, *There’s Hope for Your Church*, p. 25.



COVID-19, has affected the local church. In his ministry context, the researcher states that there were seventeen of seventy-two churches in need of revitalization in the Montgomery Baptist Association. The pandemic has made the number jump to seventy-two of seventy-two churches in need of the breath of God and a new day. Each church is already beginning to ask the question, “How does one start again?”

The gap of literature supports two other crises: the economic pandemic and the cultural pandemic. The collapse of America’s economy is causing churches to rethink their budgets, their staff capacity, and to some, their future. The cultural pandemic has driven a dagger into the heart of every congregation as they wrestle with social and racial injustice. The church's role in such a volatile but biblically necessary discussion has also had a cause and effect on the local body, compelling them to seek repentance, renewal, and other forms of revitalization.

The church at large in America has begun to feel the burden, the pressure, and the stress of a “trilogy” of pandemics. Time will tell how the ecclesia of the living God responds to these matters. For now, every church in America has been affected somehow, and all require revitalization. Presently, only trends and theories are being presented in literature and are not considered responsible scholarship. Thus, this particular literature gap could not be examined, except how it immediately affects the ten churches and their pastor revitalizers. Prayer, the study of Scripture, and a determination to desperately seek the face of God for answers have been the solution for the ten pastor revitalizers and their congregations. These present times bring them face to face with a spiritual battle over pandemic, economic, and cultural crises.

## Theological Foundations

### Introduction

The theological foundation will reflect the truth found in a high capacity leader named Nehemiah. He led his people with a compelling vision, a devoted work ethic, a contagious passion, and a kingdom focus that led to community strategy and missiology. In the book of Nehemiah, one will find an Old Testament standard for a successful leader. One will also find the characteristic of a humble servant, full of God's wisdom and power. The theological foundation will parallel the leader's dependability upon the Lord's grace for success and his meek understanding that heart change comes only from the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>94</sup>

One can find many examples of leaders in the Bible. A person could examine the life of Jesus, Paul's journeys, the writings of Luke, and John's friendship in the New Testament. Likewise, in the Old Testament, one might discover Abraham's leadership principles or learn military strategy from David or prophetic direction from Elijah. Yet when it comes to revitalization narratives, the list draws to three servants named Ezra, Haggai, and Nehemiah.

Ezra was a Jewish exile from Babylon of priestly descent. He was the first to lead the Jews to Jerusalem to begin the rebuilding of the temple. The priest proclaimed the Word of God and resulted in a significant reform of the people of God. Haggai was a prophet who motivated the Jewish people to return to the rebuilding of the temple. Together, God used them to lead the people in worship and, as one, to build the temple.

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<sup>94</sup> Wilson, *The Prodigal Church*, 163.

Ezra presents the people of God “as one man” (Ezra 3:1). The expression refers to the Jews from captivity returning to the Holy Land and were already settled, “as one man,” with a common purpose.<sup>95</sup> This common purpose led the people of Israel to adhere to the Word of God by building an altar to sacrifice burnt offerings (Ezra 3:2). They began the journey of rebuilding the temple and laid the foundation. From there, they sang to the Lord, singing, “He is good; his love to Israel endures forever” (Ezra 3:11). The Bible states that the Israelites gave a great shout of praise, and the older people wept aloud when they saw the laid foundation (Ezra 3:11-13). Like those participating in revitalizing a church, their shouts of praise fit this historic moment as the Jews saw the temple restoration becoming a reality.<sup>96</sup> The theological foundation of praise and unity is paramount to the success of church revitalization.

The book of Ezra also demonstrates a theological foundation regarding the revitalizer’s character. Ezra says, “Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses, which the LORD, the God of Israel, had given. The king had granted him everything he asked, for the hand of the LORD, his God was on him” (Ezra 7:6). The priest was well versed in Scripture, with God’s hand and favor on him. Ezra feared nothing but God and the Lord’s blessing because of his faithfulness. John Wesley once said, “Give me a hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not whether they be clergymen or laymen, they alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven upon earth.”<sup>97</sup> Ezra was that kind of preacher, as should be a pastor revitalizer.

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<sup>95</sup> F. Charles Fensham, “The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah,” in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, gen. ed. R.K. Harrison (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 59.

<sup>96</sup> Mervin Breneman, “Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther,” in *The New American Commentary*, vol.10, gen. ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishers, 1993).

<sup>97</sup> Bob Bickford and Mark Hallock, *Am I a Replanter? Thirty Days of Discerning God’s Call* (Littleton, CO: Acoma Press, 2017), 97.

Ezra demonstrated confessional prayer as an essential part of the pastor revitalizer, especially related to the people's sinful behavior. In Ezra, chapter nine records that the priest heard of God's people marrying and intermarrying to detestable women from other communities. The example of the leaders had led to all of this. Ezra is shocked and appalled, and at the evening sacrifice, fell on his knees and prayed for all to hear, "O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our head and our guilt has reached to the heavens" (Ezra 9:6). The results were the people joined Ezra in the confession of their sins before a holy God.

The pastor revitalizer should include himself and pray with a broken heart over the people of God regarding their sins. Richard Blackaby said, "How much time do you spend preparing to talk to your people about God on Sunday morning compared to how little time you spend preparing what you are going to say to God about your people?"<sup>98</sup> Ezra lays the blueprint of a confessional prayer foundation for the pastor revitalizer.

While Ezra may have been the shepherd, the prophet Haggai was the motivator. He builds a theological foundation for the believer's priorities. The Lord's Word from Haggai 1:8, "Build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," is the centerpiece of this minor prophet book of two chapters.<sup>99</sup> The main message is to build God's house. Haggai presents Old Testament history through the "Book of Haggai," as well as Ezra 5:1 and 6:14. Different editions of Scripture attribute portions of the Psalms to Haggai. Yet this one, whose name means "feast of Yahweh," seems to suggest the blessing comes when one is obedient to

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<sup>98</sup> Mark Clifton and Kenneth Priest, *Rubicons of Revitalization: Overcoming Eight Common Barriers to Church Renewal* (Littleton, CO: Acoma Press, 2018), 30.

<sup>99</sup> Robert L. Alden, "Haggai," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7 gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 569.

God, a real lesson to be learned by every pastor revitalizer and congregation. In Haggai 1, the prophet acknowledged how God blew their houses down because His house was in ruins while they built their own, “You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?” declares the Lord Almighty. “Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house” (Hag 1:9). The prophet showed how God brought a drought on the land because of the people’s indifference. But when they repented and were faithfully building the house of God again, Haggai the prophet spoke the Word of the Lord, “From this day on I will bless you... And I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you” (Hag 2:19, 23).

In the present day, people are selfishly building their fortunes and households rather than obeying and doing God's will. Like Haggai, the pastor revitalizer must speak to the congregation’s priorities. The handling of laziness and indifference accompanies the authority of Scripture, or the church will not see revitalization. The call to salvation is a call for one to live their life on mission with God. Christian living is not for people who sit in the pew but for active participants.<sup>100</sup> Like Haggai, for the pastor revitalizer to pray, preach, and insist that God’s people get back to building God’s house is imperative as a theological foundation.

With Ezra and Haggai calling for repentance, Nehemiah was a strategic leader who led the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. While all three men played an important part in redemptive history, the researcher has chosen to focus on Nehemiah's principles for the thesis project. The name “Nehemiah” means “the comfort of Yahweh.”<sup>101</sup> Nehemiah’s residence is Susa. It is there

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<sup>100</sup> Claude V. King, *Return To Me: God’s Plea and Promise to His Church* (Nashville, TN: Lifeway Press, 2020), 78.

<sup>101</sup> Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Ezra-Nehemiah,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol.4, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library of the Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 680.

where Daniel saw himself in a vision (Dan 8:2). It was the site of the story of Esther. Most scholars believe the origin of Nehemiah's distress was not the walls being torn down 140 years before his time, but rather by the episode of Ezra 4:7-23, or the protest of Rehum and Shimshai that caused the Persian king to order the Jews to cease.<sup>102</sup> Nehemiah's anguish was over the clear and present danger of the Israelites, which would only continue unless there was a new intervention, namely Nehemiah and Artaxerxes I. Like Nehemiah's foundational beginning, a pastor revitalizer has to discover courage in the journey, to speak up when no one else will.

Nehemiah addresses every theme in the Literature Review. Theme one addresses the truth about dying and declining churches. Nehemiah spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem (Neh 1:1-4). Theme two addresses the revitalized church and God's glory. Nehemiah addressed how the Lord would get the glory for rebuilding the wall (Neh 2:17-20). Theme three addresses metrics, goals, and success in church revitalization. Nehemiah commissioned the people to produce a metric of safety and honor, a strategic plan, and a promise that in the end, God would get the glory (Neh 2-6). Theme four addresses missiological imperatives for church revitalization. Nehemiah spent chapters praying over the imperative of the work and the future (Neh 9-10). Theme five addresses the quality of a church revitalizer. Nehemiah 1 speaks of the leader's characteristics, who would lead God's people to rebuild the wall.

#### Prelude to a Theological Foundation: An Intimate Prayer Life

Though the research did not include prayer as an ingredient for high capacity leadership, it is a prelude to any theological foundation that a pastor revitalizer leads from his knees. Nehemiah was a prayer warrior. For this great leader, prayer was a regular part of living and working. Nehemiah began his book with a prayer filled with fasting and mourning over

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<sup>102</sup> Yamauchi, "Ezra-Nehemiah," 681.

Jerusalem: “When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days, I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven” (Neh 1:4-6 NIV). The arrow prayer reflected Nehemiah’s priorities, seeking heaven’s door for a God-filled answer.<sup>103</sup> The pastor revitalizer cannot help churches overcome their greatest need unless he leads from his knees. One’s prayer discipline is the highest core value of leadership for anyone seeking success, including a pastor revitalizer.

### Theological Foundation One: A Compelling Vision

Most churches in need of revitalization have lost their sense of mission, along with their understanding of God’s greatness. The pastor revitalizer meets their most significant need casting a biblical vision for what God is calling them to become and how the Lord is commanding them to obey these orders.<sup>104</sup> Their willingness to follow such a compelling vision is the leading factor in whether the church will see God’s glory, power, and promises. One must be able to re-envision the church and communicate this truth if there is any hope for the future of the congregation.<sup>105</sup>

Nehemiah was able to cast a compelling vision because he had an encompassing burden. He began his journey against the backdrop of the smoky ruins of Zion, saying to the people, “You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire” (Neh 2:17). Nehemiah was honest by pointing to the city in ruins, and the gates burned. The revitalizer cast a vision to the people regarding what they needed to do: rebuild the wall. In

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<sup>103</sup> Derek Kidner, “Ezra and Nehemiah,” vol. 12, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1979), 85.

<sup>104</sup> Davis, *Revitalize*, 105.

<sup>105</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Re-Vision: The Key to Transforming Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 7.

compelling language, Nehemiah assured them they would do it together, “Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace” (Neh 2:17b). To Nehemiah, on the debit side was “disgrace,” but on the credit side was the “hand of God” and His purpose.<sup>106</sup> The people’s response to Nehemiah’s compelling vision was miraculous. The pastor revitalizer should engage this theological principle and use this skill to compel people with healthy vision to submissive obedience for God’s plan.

### Theological Foundation Two: A Devoted Work Ethic

Hard work is a Biblical picture of any man of God. The church especially should see their pastor as one who wakes up early to give his life to Christ and his service to the community. Nehemiah reflects a strong work ethic of his people and himself: “So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart” (Neh 4:6). “Heart” reflects the determined will, mind, and emotion. Even in times of trouble and danger, they did not stop the work: “So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out” (Neh 4:21). These verses show the dedication of God’s people to work “till the stars came out (a rabbinical statement reflecting a specific time in the evening).<sup>107</sup>

One should note that in Nehemiah and elsewhere in the Bible, the believer’s work ethic is a Scriptural requirement. The creation story mandated that men should work (Gen 3:19). Paul addressed Timothy with a similar admonishment, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15).

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<sup>106</sup> Kidner, 90.

<sup>107</sup> Breneman, “Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther,” 199.



In his commentary on 2 Timothy, Thomas Lea states three truths from the scripture regarding a good work ethic. First, Timothy was to seek God's approval regarding his work ethic. Second, Timothy was to work not as a negligent laborer but as a faithful servant. Third, Timothy was to use the same energy and effort in his study and presentation of the Word of God.<sup>108</sup> Paul said a believer should work with all his heart "as one working for the Lord" (Col 3:23). The pastor revitalizer should understand the high value that Scripture places on a strong work ethic.

### Theological Foundation Three: A Contagious Passion

In Andrew Davis' book, *Revitalize*, the first chapter speaks of the zeal of Christ for the church (His bride).<sup>109</sup> A revitalizer should love the brethren as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. In a message preached at First Baptist Church Woodstock, Johnny Hunt stated the following, "If one loves Jesus, one should love His bride. If one loves Jesus, one should believe in His bride."<sup>110</sup> If a pastor revitalizer lacks passion, he cannot effectively lead a church. But if he loves what he is doing, loves and believes in the people he is doing it with, and is confident in his purpose, the revitalizer's contagious passion will be seen, heard, and embraced.

Nehemiah had such a contagious passion. He always rallied the people with a purpose and a promise from God. Such examples are Nehemiah 2:17b-18: "Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace. (*Purpose*) I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me (*Promise*)." Another example

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<sup>108</sup> Thomas D Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, "1, 2 Timothy and Titus," vol. 34, *The New American Commentary*, David S. Dockery, General Editor (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1992), 215.

<sup>109</sup> Davis, *Revitalize*, 13.

<sup>110</sup> Johnny M. Hunt, First Baptist Church, Woodstock Georgia, *Message Preached on Sunday Evening, September 2012*, as heard by the researcher.

is Nehemiah 4:20 NIV: “Whenever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there (*Purpose*). Our God will fight for us (*Promise*)!”

Nehemiah passionately led people by courageously “staying on the wall” and continuing the work (Neh 6:3-4), despite Tobiah and Sanballat's opposition. While it is uncertain whether the work would have stopped if Nehemiah excused himself for a few days of negotiations, Nehemiah’s comment was undoubtedly less provocative than a flat refusal.<sup>111</sup> Passion and courage go together in the life of a pastor revitalizer, enabling the servant of God to rise above the persecution and ridicule. It is a necessary ingredient of leadership.

#### Theological Foundation Four: A Kingdom Focus with Community Context

In Bill Henard’s book, *Can These Bones Live?*, he notes that former Lifeway President Thom Rainer listed eleven signs that a church was dying or already dead. Four of the characters directly relate to kingdom focus: (1) The church refused to look like the community; (2) The church had no community-focused ministries; (3) There were no evangelistic emphases; (4) The percentage of the budget for member’s needs over community needs kept increasing.<sup>112</sup> If a church’s focus is not on the community, how can they have any future? Mark Clifton states that if one cannot reach their neighborhood, they do not have the skill set to replant the church.<sup>113</sup>

With kingdom focus, the revitalizer must assess his community, grasp the work's full picture, and respond accordingly. He must also gather support from others, perhaps sending and

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<sup>111</sup> H.G.M. Williamson, “Ezra, Nehemiah,” vol. 16, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1985), 255.

<sup>112</sup> Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live? A Practical Guide to Church Revitalization* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 3.

<sup>113</sup> Mark Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches* (Nashville: B&H Group, 2016), 63.

supporting churches.<sup>114</sup> Nehemiah applied this kingdom strategy in chapter 2:11-18. First, Nehemiah patiently evaluated the attitudes and the atmosphere of the city people (2:11). Second, Nehemiah kept his thoughts private until after he had done the needs assessment (2:12). Third, Nehemiah reviewed every detail and covered every base as he evaluated the destruction (2:13-16). Finally, Nehemiah laid out the plan for the leaders, gave God glory, and began the work. In doing so, God's hand was upon them (Neh 2:18).

Though Artaxerxes sent him, Nehemiah's mission was religiously motivated. The defenseless city was in trouble. The Hebrew word for "trouble" (*hara a*) is a strong word. It reflects an evil that could come upon them.<sup>115</sup> This man of action called for the people to bring glory to God and build the wall. In doing so, they would save themselves and restore the honor of Jerusalem.

The pastor revitalizer who has a theological foundation which has an anointed prayer life, who has the ability to cast a compelling vision, who has a reputation as a hard worker, who believes in what God is doing in and through him, and who truly understands the needs of his parish community, would be able to lead out with Nehemiah's war cry for the revitalized church, when the leader said, "Don't be afraid. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome. And fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your home" (Neh 4:14). Every pastor revitalizer should have this kind of passion for their church and community. The pastor and the people are the agents of God's grace as they prioritize the gospel, speak forth God's Word, and serve the needs of others in the name of Christ. The revitalized congregation

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<sup>114</sup> Mark Hallock, *Replant Roadmap: How Your Congregation Can Help Revitalize Dying Churches* (Littleton, CO: Acoma Press, 2017), 205.

<sup>115</sup> Fensham, "The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah," 167.

also become agencies through which God works reconciliation, regeneration, and restoration.<sup>116</sup>  
To such a biblical foundation, the man of God should seek to live out his life and ministry.

## **Theoretical Foundations**

### **Introduction**

The theoretical foundation that composes the theory and practices gathered in the thesis project and expressed in ministry examined the kind of research that has been done related to the thesis topic: “If ten pastor revitalizers with nominal leadership capacity subject themselves to high-level leadership training, then a higher level of leadership capacity in the ten pastor revitalizers should be the anticipated result.” Second, the theoretical foundation explained the researcher's plan to focus on literature not yet explored, that is, the development of pastor revitalizers to have a compelling vision, a devoted work ethic, contagious passion, and a kingdom focus with community context. The researcher paid particular attention to the theory behind the local coaching strategy and its approach to high capacity leadership in church revitalization. Finally, the researcher justified the research conducted on nominal leaders' gathering, proper training, and personal coaching, developing them to become high capacity pastor revitalizers.

The literature review discovered the following themes: 1) the truth about dying and declining churches; 2) the revitalized church and God's glory; 3) metrics, goals, and success in church revitalization; 4) missiological imperatives in church revitalization; 5) qualities of a church revitalizer. Every one of these themes supported the need to recruit a high capacity leader for a church experiencing the need for revitalization. Through the development of personal

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<sup>116</sup> David J. Peter, *Maximizing the Midsize Church: Effective Leadership for Fruitful Mission and Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2018), 67.

coaching and national exposure, the church revitalizer was able to get a full look at his ministry and shape it toward a better day with more persuasive leadership skills.

The researcher examined, in particular, the book of Nehemiah as a theological foundation for the thesis project. The research analyzed the biblical connection to a church revitalizer's core competencies: 1) a compelling vision; 2) a devoted work ethic; 3) a contagious passion; 4) a kingdom focus with community context. He also looked at the fundamental truth to all biblical leadership: an intimate prayer life. He found that the Bible fully supports these core competencies, as reflected in Nehemiah's life, and supported through other biblical characters such as Ezra and Haggai. The thesis proved that these four leadership characteristics and an intimate prayer life are fundamental steps for the church revitalizer to help his church see a new day.

#### Theory One: What Kind of Research Is Related to the Thesis?

Leadership and congregational strategy reflected most of the research on church revitalization. In the literature review, the researcher found that most authors spent most of their time answering the holistic question of church revitalization and minimum time on the skills and gift sets of the leader. Though discussed in a future chapter, there were not many links between leadership's capacity and the success of the mission.

The researcher discovered the gap of literature and acknowledged it. He identified that one could find durable material on leadership from several sources and find additional writings on the replanter and his actions with the church. Still, no one had spoken explicitly to the leadership capacity of a pastor revitalizer. Later, the researcher met Jimbo Stewart. Stewart is an associate on the Replant Team of NAMB and serves with the Florida Baptist Convention. He has organized a robust assessment tool for the pastor replanter, and NAMB uses it for the replanters'

pre-assessment.<sup>117</sup> Bob Bickford and Mark Hallock wrote a book entitled, *Am I a Replanter?*<sup>118</sup>

Though both tools have excellent principles and utilize a similar strategy, neither address the pastor revitalizer, that pastor called by a church to bring new life and a better day, and his leadership capacity. Consequently, North America sees an increasing deficit of church revitalizers as trained leaders in church revitalization and renewal.<sup>119</sup> The researcher used his thesis project to bring light to this growing gap and demand for more trained leaders.

#### Theory Two: What Was the Researcher's Plan to Study Pastor Revitalizers?

Present-day literature has not yet fully explored the pastor revitalizer and his leadership capacity. The researcher analyzed the pastor revitalizer's development by examining and assisting him to become a more influential leader through the competencies of a creative vision, a devoted work ethic, a contagious passion, and a kingdom focus with community context. The effort resulted in the transition of a nominal leader into an exceptional leader.

The researcher developed two theoretical models for the plan. The *first theoretical model* was a local coaching strategy where the pastor revitalizer learned in his context, how to create a compelling vision, build a devoted work ethic, lead with contagious passion, and present a kingdom focus with community context. The pastor revitalizer assimilated truth and transparency through a peer-to-peer learning laboratory and personal life coaching sessions with the researcher. Each pastor revitalizer contributed to a paper on church revitalization principles

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<sup>117</sup> Jimbo Stewart, *Thirteen Characteristics of Effective Replanters* (North American Mission Board's Pre-Assessment Tool, 2019), accessed April 9, 2020, [https://training.sendnetwork.com/library/replanter-pre-assessment/register/106923/?ic=eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJpbnZpdGVfdHlwZSI6MSwic2NoY29sX2lkIjo4NjksLCJzZW5kZXJfaWQiOjg0Mjk1NCwib2ZmZXJpbmdfaWQiOjEwNjkyMywicm9sZSI6NX0.toozUi\\_V4BFLHI0-JwQpogBkN5XTtU1tj2hg4NIYNvs](https://training.sendnetwork.com/library/replanter-pre-assessment/register/106923/?ic=eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJpbnZpdGVfdHlwZSI6MSwic2NoY29sX2lkIjo4NjksLCJzZW5kZXJfaWQiOjg0Mjk1NCwib2ZmZXJpbmdfaWQiOjEwNjkyMywicm9sZSI6NX0.toozUi_V4BFLHI0-JwQpogBkN5XTtU1tj2hg4NIYNvs)

<sup>118</sup> Bickford and Hallock, *Am I a Replanter?*, Referenced Title.

<sup>119</sup> Tom Cheyney, *The Seven Pillars of Church Revitalization and Renewal: Biblical Foundations for Church Revitalization* (Orlando, Renovate Publishing Group, 2016), 45.

learned from the book of Nehemiah. These men became known as the “Sons of Nehemiah” to reflect the theological support of a high capacity leader in church revitalization.

The *second theoretical model* exposed the pastor revitalizer to other church revitalization works and leaders in North America. Most of this part of the project was through zoom interviews and other virtual meetings with national revitalization leaders such as Dr. Mark Clifton, Dr. Ken Allen, Dr. Daryl Price, and Dr. Gary Moritz. The pastor revitalizers' team virtually attended (along with the researcher) the *Revitalize Conference 2020* ([www.revitalizeconference.org](http://www.revitalizeconference.org)). The conference's host was Dr. Michael Rubino of the Cornerstone Bible Church in Port Jefferson Station, New York, and his team of many church revitalization specialists and pastors from around the country. The “Sons of Nehemiah” learned much from the critical truths taught by these revitalizers.

Key lay leaders of each congregation help to complete the qualitative research through personal interviews. The researcher and the pastor revitalizer worked with each to examine a S.W.O.T. (i.e., strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis of their respective church. For many churches, a careful analysis of strengths and challenges is an excellent place to develop a healthy church. The S.W.O.T. analysis became an essential tool of self-discovery<sup>120</sup> The researcher then gathered the theories of action research and coupled it with quantitative research.<sup>121</sup> The quantitative theory consisted of an examination which reflected a demographic study and church histories of each of the ten pastor revitalizers. Each pastor revitalizer took a pastor revitalizer assessment, produced by the researcher. Many churches seeking a pastor

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<sup>120</sup> Tom Cheyney, *Thirty-Eight Church Revitalization Models for the Twenty-First Century* (Orlando: Renovate Publishing Group, 2014), 87.

<sup>121</sup> Stringer, *Action Research*, Fourth Edition (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014), 77.

revitalizer in the Montgomery Baptist Association use this tool. The quantitative research also contained the last five years of each of the churches' SBC Annual Church profile.

### Theory Three: What Justifies the Research of High Capacity Leaders?

The researcher was the Director of Missions of the Montgomery Baptist Association. Many churches in the MBA are choosing the replanting model for church revitalization. Yet, if given an opportunity and a high capacity leader as their pastor revitalizer, many churches would succeed and blossom as a kingdom-minded, Christ-honoring fellowship. With proper leadership, they would impact their community in a positive and life-changing way.

The best way to explain the church revitalization and replanting model is to utilize hospital terms. A church that decides to transition is akin to being on *hospice*. They will be cared for with love, prayer, and compassion, but congregations make decisions that allow their legacy to keep on living through someone else. One would call this model “replanting.” However, some churches find themselves in *intensive care*. With no immediate and intentional intervention, they are sick and will undoubtedly see the end of their congregation, as they know it. As they evaluate the present situation, their energy level, financial stability, and degree of hope that the Holy Spirit desires them to continue, compels the church to move toward a better day, rather than accept a season of transition. One would call this model “church revitalization.” The researcher’s challenge was to analyze and help implement how the revitalizing church could discover a high capacity pastor revitalizer to lead them toward biblical obedience and a new day.

Therefore, the justification of this research was for the local church seeking revitalization. They pray for a pastor that is better than mediocre. They seek a more influential leader. They desire a trained revitalizer. They deserve a second chance. If the church had a pastor revitalizer



leading in a high capacity fashion, together, like Nehemiah and the people of God, they could move mountains.

The Director of Missions has seen too much money and time wasted, only to see a tragic ending and a more declining church because of a nominal leader. Sadly, this researcher has already transitioned four legacy churches in the last four years with a replant model. The community has experienced renewal in four areas of the city because of the sharper vision and relationship to the current culture/demographic. Although each has a high capacity replanter leading the way with God getting the glory, the legacy members are still left departing to other churches with a mindset of “what could have been.” The missional dollars are irrecoverable from what used to be from this same property. Therefore, the thesis project's justification is biblically centered, Christ-honoring, and kingdom-focused to raise up “Sons of Nehemiah” for the local church.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### Introduction

Research has shown many churches are in decline in America. One can reflect upon the life cycle of a church in the following illustrations:

#### Figure One:

##### *Early Signs Your Church Is Headed For Decline: The Unstuck Church*

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Figure One reflects the life cycle of a particular church. The bell curve's right side exhibits a management mentality versus leadership and visionary growth on the bell curve's left side.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Tony Morgan, "Early Signs Your Church Is Headed for Decline: The Unstuck Church," *Tony Morgan Live* (2016), accessed October 17, 2020, <https://tonymorganlive.com/2017/04/17/signs-church-decline-unstuck-church/>. Removed to comply with copyright.

**Figure Two:**

***A Church's Life Cycle***

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Figure Two reflects the dream that leads to development followed by the nostalgia that leads to death. The green highlights the best years. <sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Keith Williams, "A Church's Life Cycle," *The Baptist New Mexican*, (2016), accessed October 18, 2020, [https://gobnm.com/perspectives/a\\_pastor\\_s\\_viewpoint/a-churchs-life-cycle/article\\_7d1f67ce-2cbe-11e6-a530-8b1d8cc3347a.html](https://gobnm.com/perspectives/a_pastor_s_viewpoint/a-churchs-life-cycle/article_7d1f67ce-2cbe-11e6-a530-8b1d8cc3347a.html). Removed to comply with copyright.

**Figure Three:**

***Does a Church Have a Lifecycle?***

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Figure Three describes the life cycle of a congregation utilizing seasons of renewal and revitalization. Some examples of this would be the church's attempt to redefine themselves, redevelop their congregation, and finally total rebirth.<sup>124</sup>

The above figures illustrate a church in decline. The researcher submits that the key to any hope of church renewal is in the pastor revitalizer leadership within the congregation. The methodology chapter presents the problem, the purpose, and the thesis. After both quantitative and qualitative research, the theory remains true: If ten pastor revitalizers with nominal leadership capacity (scale 2/3 on a 1-5 margin) subject themselves to high-level leadership training, which focuses on such skill improvements as having a more compelling vision, a devoted work ethic, a contagious passion, and a kingdom focus that has a community missiology

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<sup>124</sup> Andy Lunt, "Does a Church Have a Lifecycle?," *Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church* (2016), accessed October 17, 2020, <https://www.bwcumc.org/article/does-a-church-have-a-lifecycle/>. Removed to comply with copyright.

strategy within their church context, then a higher level of leadership capacity (scale 4/5 on a 1-5 margin) in the ten pastor revitalizers should be the anticipated result.

#### How Was the Problem Addressed?

The problem is that many pastors who serve Montgomery congregations that require church revitalization, while good shepherds and many being highly educated, are not commonly seen or expected to be high capacity leaders or trained revitalizers. Therefore, the researcher addressed the problem with the following intervention plan:

Look: The researcher gathered relevant information to help understand the pastor revitalizer and the church he pastors. The data provided both the pastor's personal history and career biographical, along with his present situation. The researcher also gathered relevant information regarding the church in need of revitalization. He also collected quantitative research that reflected both church and community data.

Think: The researcher explored and analyzed what is happening at this present moment with the pastor revitalizer's life and the church. The researcher observed if the church was united or divided. He watched for the leaders to work well as a team, and in some cases, discovered a management/worker mindset. The researcher looked for hidden agendas that have produced unresolved conflict. He examined if anyone openly or quietly stated they have "set the clock" regarding an exit of the pastor or them from the church? The researcher looked over the finances to see if they were under siege or did the receipts accurately reflect the church's size and financial makeup. Finally, he listened to see if anyone in the congregation could explain in an "elevator speech" how or why things are the way they are. Most could not.

Act: The researcher determined a course of action based on analysis and interpretation and worked to implement an intervention plan that increased the pastor revitalizer's leadership

capacity from nominal to exceptional. He then evaluated the effectiveness of such action regarding the change of spirit and the pastor revitalizer's determination to effect change in their church and community.

#### What Were the Details of the Actual Intervention Plan?

**Look:** The researcher gathered the following data that summarized the present situation of both the pastor revitalizer and the congregation:

The researcher gathered ten pastor revitalizers to examine the raising of their leadership capacity from nominal to exceptional. To bring a unified effort and a sense of brotherhood, the researcher named them the *Sons of Nehemiah*. The name championed the theological foundation, where Nehemiah reflected the thesis's core competencies: 1) a compelling vision; 2) a devoted work ethic; 3) a contagious passion; 4) a kingdom focus with a community context. Each of these pastors serve in the River Region of Central Alabama. The following is a short biography of each of these men. The *Sons of Nehemiah* (SON), a number, and their church's initials are the study's codes.

Son One serves at the RBC. He is in his sixties and has been a pastor for most of his adult life. Son One has a master's degree from Southwestern Seminary. He is married with grandchildren. Son One has been at RBC for two years.

Son Two serves at the PRBC. He is in his fifties and has been a pastor for a short time. Son Two has a master's degree in engineering, but only a certificate from the Ministry Training Institute of Samford University. He is married with grandchildren. Son Two has been at PRBC for two years.

Son Three serves at the COPR. He is in his fifties and started the church four years ago after coming home from Ecuador's international mission field. Son Three has a master's degree

from New Orleans Seminary. He is married with teenagers. Son Three is the founding pastor of COPR, having started the congregation four years ago.

Son Four serves at the CHBC. He is in his thirties and at his first church after seminary. Son Four has a PhD and DMin degree from New Orleans Seminary. He is married with young children. Son Four has been at CHBC for one year.

Son Five serves at the LBC. In his seventies, he has served as a bi-vocational pastor for most of his adult life, having served in the US Air Force and Alabama. Son Five has a master's degree from New Orleans Seminary. He is married with grandchildren and great-grandchildren. SON Five has been at LBC for fourteen years.

Son Six serves at the ANBC. He is in his sixties and serves as the Asian Church Planting Catalyst for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and the Montgomery Baptist Association. Son Six has a DMin degree from Golden Gate Seminary. He is married with grandchildren. SON Six started the Korean congregation eight years ago.

Son Seven serves at the SBC. He is in his forties, and this is his first church as a senior pastor. Son Seven has a master's degree from a National Baptist seminary in Miami, Florida. He is married with grade-school children. SON Seven has been at SBC for five years.

Son Eight serves at the GNFBC. He is in his sixties, and this is his first church as a senior pastor. Son Eight has a master's degree in education. He is retired from the U.S. Air Force and the Montgomery County Public School System. He is married with grandchildren. SON Eight has been at GNFBC as a Senior Pastor for less than a year but has served on their staff for four years.

Son Nine serves at the SJBC. He is in his thirties, and this is his first church as a senior pastor. Son Nine has a master's degree in accounting and also serves for the State of Alabama.

He is married with young children. SON Nine has been at SJBC for one year as a senior pastor but has been on staff for four years.

Son Ten serves at the SCBC. He is in his seventies and has had a distinguished career as the number two ministry leader of churches in Florida and as the Director of Missions in a megametropolis. He is married with grandchildren. SON Ten has been at SCBC for one year.

The ten churches also have a history that has brought them to the need of church revitalization:

RBC moved to its present location in the sixties, having been a church organized since 1940. Though the church had a banner season in the 1990s, they declined in membership most of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Their building is a large structure, but their congregation is predominantly older adults, with an average attendance of one hundred.

PRBC is a rural church where the city came to it in the late twentieth century. Though the church experienced massive growth in the nineties and the first decade of the twenty-first century, it has declined for many years. The building is a moderate structure, where a congregation of a few families has an average attendance of fifteen. Recently, they adopted a Chinese congregation to share their facility.

COPR is a new church plant built from the dream of their missionary pastor and his wife on the growing edge of the city. They utilize shared space for their facilities. Though the congregation has experienced massive growth in their few short years, a series of conflicts and membership moves to other cities has brought about a significant decline, with an average of thirty in attendance. The congregation represents mid to younger adults with families.

CHBC is a church birthed in 1931. During most of the latter half of the twentieth century, the church was considered a flagship church to the Montgomery Baptist Association. However, it



has experienced much decline in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with an average attendance of one hundred. The present congregation represents mid to older adults.

LBC is a rural church birthed in the late 1800s. Over the years, it has experienced many “ups and downs,” with the church closing during the depression years of the 1930s. Presently, many of their families have moved to the city or other churches to discover the resources needed for their children and grandchildren. Currently, the congregation has an average attendance of twenty and represents mostly mid to senior adults.

ANBC began in the 1990s as an effort to gather Koreans and Filipinos of the River Region. The pulpit language was second-generation English, but leaders related to many first-generation immigrants with their heart language. The church has experienced much decline as they have not made arrangements to locate near the membership, nor have they provided resources for their young families. They presently average fifteen in attendance, most mid to senior adults.

SBC began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It rose to be a strong African American National Baptist Church with their pastors engaged heavily in the fifties and sixties' civil rights era. Though they experienced a significant decline because of one of their pastor's moral failure, they have since begun to build back under their young pastor's present leadership. Their average attendance is 250, representing all ages.

GNFBC is a new church plant, begun in 2016. In recent months, the church split, and the associate pastor became their senior leader. The church is starting to see a move upward and forward as they now have new land and opportunity. Their average attendance is fifty, representing various ages.

SJBC is a church with a significant African American legacy. The congregation began in the early twentieth century. The biblical community played a crucial role in the civil rights era of the fifties and sixties. As the city moved eastward, a division occurred when their pastor sold their facilities to land developers, forcing the church to seek new property. The dispute created a significant decline, but the church is rapidly returning under their present pastor's leadership. They presently average 130 people of various ages.

SCBC is a rural church birthed in the late 1800s. The “church in the wildwood” has had a rich circuit-riding history known as a “quarter church.” These churches have a pastor who would come only twice a month while the congregation would have Sunday School every Sunday. The assembly had a church split several years ago and has not recovered numerically from that demise. They presently have an average of ten, with many ages represented.

According to current census reports, the following quantitative data tables reflect the ten churches and their demographic five-mile population, the median age, the dominant race, and the average household income. Another table demonstrates the annual church profiles of the churches who reported the data to their denomination.

<b>Table One: Demographics of Montgomery Baptist Churches in Study</b>	
<b>RBC</b>	
○	Population in five-mile radius- 149,526
○	Median age in five-mile radius- 35.6
○	Dominant race in five-mile radius- black (49.6%), white (43.5%)
○	Median household income in a five-mile radius- \$50,455
<b>PRBC</b>	
○	Population in five-mile radius- 12,932
○	Median age in five-mile radius- 37.9
○	Dominant race in five-mile radius- white (71.3%), black (18.2%)
○	Median household income in a five-mile radius- \$85,579

<b>COPR</b>
○ Population in five-mile radius- 52,757
○ Median age in five-mile radius- 37.8
○ Dominant race in five-mile radius- white (56.5%), black (34.9%)
○ Median household income in a five-mile radius- \$67,323
<b>CHBC</b>
○ Population in five-mile radius- 142,688
○ Median age in five-mile radius- 35.7
○ Dominant race in five-mile radius- black (59.5%), white (35.7%)
○ Median household income in a five-mile radius- \$40,194
<b>LBC</b>
○ Population in five-mile radius- 774
○ Median age in five-mile radius- 45.6
○ Dominant race in five-mile radius- black (53.2%), white (46.4%)
○ Median household income in a five-mile radius- \$34,979
<b>ANBC</b>
○ Population in five-mile radius- 132,887
○ Median age in five-mile radius- 36.2
○ Dominant race in five-mile radius- black (47.2%), white (45.9%), Asian (3.2%)
○ Median household income in a five-mile radius- \$53,160
<b>SBC</b>
○ Population in five-mile radius- 128,024
○ Median age in five-mile radius- 36.0
○ Dominant race in five-mile radius- black (61.6%), white (34.1%)
○ Median household income in a five-mile radius- \$39,235
<b>GNFBC</b>
○ Population in five-mile radius- 2,051
○ Median age in five-mile radius- 35.7
○ Dominant race in five-mile radius- black (73.4%), white (25.8%)
○ Median household income in a five-mile radius- \$24,354
<b>SJBC</b>

○ Population in five-mile radius- 108,319
○ Median age in five-mile radius- 37.3
○ Dominant race in five-mile radius- white (53.1%), black (40.6%)
○ Median household income in a five-mile radius- \$52,736
<b>SCBC</b>
○ Population in five-mile radius- 1,710
○ Median age in five-mile radius- 40.1
○ Dominant race in five-mile radius- black (60.9%), white (38.1%)
○ Median household income in a five-mile radius- \$30,843

**Table Two: Annual Church Profile of Montgomery Baptist Churches in Study**

<b>RBC</b>
○ Attendance Ratio from 2008/2019 – 233 (2008) /115 (2019)
○ Total Baptisms in Six Years- 64
○ Total Missional Giving in Six Years- \$1,051,843
○ Average Annual Giving Receipts of Ten Years- \$696,451.56
<b>PRBC</b>
○ Attendance Ratio from 2008/2019 – 94 (2008) /17 (2019)
○ Total Baptisms in Six Years- 22
○ Total Missional Giving in Six Years- \$46,881
○ Average Annual Giving Receipts of Ten Years- \$102,371.00
<b>COPR</b>
○ Attendance Ratio from 2008/2019 – 48 (2008) /65 (2019)
○ Total Baptisms in Six Years- 13
○ Total Missional Giving in Six Years- \$45,971
○ Average Annual Giving Receipts of Five Years- \$126,030.00
<b>CHBC</b>
○ Attendance Ratio from 2008/2019 – 164 (2008) /75 (2019)
○ Total Baptisms in Six Years- 45
○ Total Missional Giving in Six Years- \$688,607.00
○ Average Annual Giving Receipts of Ten Years- \$563,855.80
<b>LBC</b>
○ Attendance Ratio from 2008/2019 – 35 (2008) /16 (2019)

○ Total Baptisms in Six Years- 5
○ Total Missional Giving in Six Years- \$94,372
○ Average Annual Giving Receipts of Ten Years- \$52,511.20
<b>ANBC</b>
○ Attendance Ratio from 2008/2019 – 30 (2008) /12 (2019)
○ Total Baptisms in Six Years- 9
○ Total Missional Giving in Six Years- \$48,690
○ Average Annual Giving Receipts of Ten Years- \$10,062.50
<b>SBC</b>
○ Attendance Ratio from 2008/2019 – 520 (2008) / 250 (2019)
○ Total Baptisms in Six Years- 16
○ Total Missional Giving in Six Years- \$25,000
○ Average Annual Giving Receipts of Ten Years- \$300,000.00
<b>GNFBC</b>
○ Attendance Ratio from 2016/2019 – 43 (2008) /33 (2019)
○ Total Baptisms in Six Years- 4
○ Total Missional Giving in Six Years- \$1,200
○ Average Annual Giving Receipts of Four Years- \$38,000.00
<b>SJBC</b>
○ Attendance Ratio from 2008/2019 – 80 (2008) /90 (2019)
○ Total Baptisms in Six Years- 15
○ Total Missional Giving in Six Years- \$3,001
○ Average Annual Giving Receipts of Ten Years- \$89,772.00
<b>SCBC</b>
○ Attendance Ratio from 2008/2019 – 26 (2008) /9 (2019)
○ Total Baptisms in Six Years- 4
○ Total Missional Giving in Six Years- \$62,197
○ Average Annual Giving Receipts of Ten Years- \$29,828.70

The congregations had various opinions of their communities. One can qualify these in three patterns: 1) urban/suburban; 2) rural; 3) ethnic.

1. Urban/Suburban Churches- These congregations had more buildings, more community influence, and more to lose than most other churches. In general, they once were the flagship churches of the Montgomery Baptist Association. These churches had the most prominent programs, the most significant ministries, and supported missions with passion and boldness. Their attendance numbers of the sixties and seventies were such that multiple services and baptism numbers always achieved a local association's proclamation as well as the state convention. None of these churches experienced a decline by major conflict or immediate departures. Similar to “dimmer of a light switch going down,” the decline was slow but steady, to the point where one day everyone in the congregation realized they were in trouble. Most grew accustomed to the deterioration, wishing for change but not seeing an emergency or urgency to the matter. The community used to call upon their pastors for invocations and involvement in civic decisions. In turn, they always considered themselves strong advocates of the local schools and other significant events of the community. In the nineties and the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these Montgomery churches began to encounter severe decline. Their congregations grew older and smaller. Families departed to seek appropriate programs for their children. It became a rarity for baptisms, and additions were usually older and mainly the transfer of membership from another sister church (due to conflict). They lost touch with the community and the community with them. Presently, when asked, most in the community were unaware of a church across the street or nearby. The people spoken to did not have anything to say, bad or good. They just did not know them. Though there are discussions of money shortages, massive decline, and the church's inevitable closure, most conversations with the legacy groups implied that this would likely happen but not

on their watch. There is not much interest in making sacrifices to create major change.

Though they reminisce of the days of intense, vibrant leaders, the congregation generally prefers their present pastor as a shepherd “chaplain” to their aging church.

2. Rural Churches- The rural churches in the study are seeing a decline brought about by a change in the agricultural community. The early days of the church existed in the context of farming communities where families were living on the farm, working on the farm, attending the rural schools, and producing generational support of marriage within the community, along with an inheritance of the farm by the children. The unity brought about strong support and allegiance to the local church. Though many would have circuit-riding preachers, the biblical community of faith was strong and faithful. The congregation would participate weekly in Sunday School and other catalytic lessons that taught Bible and missions. Most of the churches had multiple families of which were interrelated. The 21st-century shift began the decline, mainly due to people's departure to the city, searching for jobs and careers not supported by an agricultural community. These families never returned. Corporations purchased many family farms this century. In some areas, the land was sold to developers by those who had inherited it but were not returning to a rural lifestyle. The population that came had the transportation and aptitude to leave their community for the city to attain a place of worship for their families. All of the traditional family chapels in the study presently have less than twenty present in active membership. Those in the community do not know much about the church but acknowledge that some of the people they know attend there. They could not discuss any activities of the congregation. The congregations are appreciative of their pastor but not dependent upon their pastor for existence. They plan to continue to meet if it is just one

family, mostly thinking that time will change things. Their bank accounts and mindset can support such a strategy.

3. Ethnic Churches- The Ethnic churches in the study (African American and Korean) experienced most of their decline by conflict. The departures happened mostly over significant differences of opinion, moral failures, or refusal to worship in a particular area of the city that did not populate their people group (Korean). They seemed to always center around the pastor and a conflict instigated by his inability to lead due to an incident. The African American churches have rich legacies. Most of the older congregations were heroes in the civil rights movements of the fifties and sixties. Their allegiance to these memories has been a stumbling block for the church to move forward. Though the churches are in decline, all except the pastor do not recognize their perpetual decline and the church's potential closing. Most of the communities know the African American churches, mainly by history but not present action in the community. The Korean churches are primarily internal and isolated, so most communities are not aware of their neighborhood presence.

Many members of the *Sons of Nehemiah* took the D.I.S.C. assessment. The profile enabled them to examine their leadership style and have a clear understanding of how this affects the church's life. The pastor revitalizer's score can be found in Appendix W. Clifton and Priest present a refresher course of the D.I.S.C. as:

- **D** is the dominant personality, outgoing and task-focused.
- **I** is the inspiring personality, outgoing and people-focused.
- **S** is the supportive personality, reserved yet people-focused.



- C is the analytical personality, reserved and task-focused.<sup>125</sup>

**Think:** The researcher analyzed through interviews, the present situation of the pastor revitalizer and the congregation. The general observations from the research with the *Sons of Nehemiah* and the legacy groups were:

1. The congregations sincerely love their pastor. They appreciate his attempt to lead them and see him as a person who might be used by the Lord to revitalize the church.
2. The pastors have a serenity that guards their spirit but are not leading with contagious passion. As a whole, most of the pastors have become tainted by the negative and brought into a sense of mediocrity produced by discouragement and resignation. They genuinely love their congregations but do not honestly believe that they can be used by the Lord to create radical change that would assure a historic revitalization of the Biblical community.
3. The pastors welcome and enjoy the company of other pastor revitalizers. They get strength from the “band of brothers” and are commonly at associational gatherings to fellowship with other like-minded men. They have enjoyed being called the *Sons of Nehemiah*.
4. None of the pastors have specific goals with metrics. None hold their people or staff accountable to a particular mile marker with a S.M.A.R.T. result (strategic, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely). The lack of goals has brought a vacuum in leadership, where the people do not have a strong understanding of where they are going and how long it will take to get there.

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<sup>125</sup> Mark Clifton and Kenneth Priest, *Rubicons of Revitalization: Overcoming 8 Common Barriers to Church Renewal* (Littleton, CO: Acoma Press, 2018), 62.

5. Very few have a strategic plan that involves their community. Most of the community events are programmatic, and there is minimum follow-up. None have a consistent monthly evangelistic touch into their community.
6. Most of the churches, though openly concerned, are not worried about the future. They are not seeking radical change that requires a change in them. Most bide their time to either move away or pass away. None see a dramatic encounter where God does exceeding great things again. They speak more reflective of the past and are more resigned to the fate of the future.
7. All of the pastors and churches emphasized the spiritual more than tangible goals with outcomes. They all spoke about being people of the Word and are highly spiritual in the sense of discipleship. But none seem to understand the high capacity qualifiers of goal-driven leadership that produces results.
8. All of the churches speak of prayer as an essential element in the growth of their church. Still, none reflect a strategic prayer ministry, especially as it relates to outside prayer walking events. While the Koreans have morning prayer meetings, none are focused on praying for lost people or for God to send laborers for the field. There is minimum literature and sermons from the pastor and leadership on the matter.

In doing a S.W.O.T. analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities Threats), the following table reflects pastors and legacy members' gathered opinions. Each qualifies as urban/suburban, rural, and ethnic divisions:

<b>Table Three: S.W.O.T. Analysis of Montgomery Baptist Churches in Study</b> <b><i>Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats</i></b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	
○ Urban/Suburban (RBC, CHBC, PRBC, COPR)- Faithfulness of God's people who are attending, students of the word, facilities, location, adequate parking, beautiful sanctuary, fellowship with meals, koinonia, people take care of one another, mission givers, wonderful pastor, and staff	
○ Rural (LBC, SCBC)- Love between members, wonderful pastor, contributions are still substantial, a real sense of unity in the church, though small	
○ Ethnic (SBC, ANBC, GNFBC, SJBC)- Membership, wonderful pastor, dedicated group, praying church, fellowship with a meal, koinonia, pastor's vision, genuinely caring for one another, contributions	
<b>Weaknesses</b>	
○ Urban/Suburban (RBC, CHBC, PRBC, COPR)- Lack of people, lack of young people, apathy, COVID crisis, location, church, and name looks old, lack of understanding about spiritual gifts, members having to do many jobs	
○ Rural (LBC, SCBC)- Bad theology gets in small churches, lack of families in the community	
○ Ethnic (SBC, ANBC, GNFBC, SJBC)- Christian education, spiritual maturity, great faith, lack of families, lack of job network opportunities, no building, COVID	
<b>Opportunities</b>	
○ Urban/Suburban (RBC, CHBC, PRBC, COPR)- Mature dependence on God, a closer walk with Christ, feeding of God's Word, more racial diversity in leadership, senior citizen meal distribution, outdoor events, a reset moment due to COVID	
○ Rural (LBC, SCBC)- country related evangelism events, marketing the "church in the wildwood," preaching and singing, virtual ministry	
○ Ethnic (SBC, ANBC, GNFBC, SJBC)- Increase in missions due to COVID (i.e., Food Distribution), family growth, generational support	
<b>Threats</b>	
○ Urban/Suburban (RBC, CHBC, PRBC, COPR)- People dying, leaving and numbers declining, budget decrease, major building issues, lack of fresh leadership, loss of moral compass in society and its threat on the church	
○ Rural (LBC, SCBC)- No young people, one family away from closure, a perpetual decline of the farming community	
○ Ethnic (SBC, ANBC, GNFBC, SJBC)- Becoming complacent, laziness and not attending, tithing, or supporting due to pandemic	

**Act:** As the research qualified the solution, the researcher defined a course of action for the pastor revitalizer by carrying out the two following frameworks:

- a. A Local Coaching Strategy- Beginning in August, the researcher personally coached the pastor revitalizers for six weeks. Along with the use of personal assessment tools (i.e., DISC, MBA Revitalizer Assessment, NAMB Replant Assessment), He presented the following books for them to read and have for their study:

- Bob Bickford and Mark Hallock, *Am I a Replanter?*
- Bob Burton, *The Spiritual DNA of a Church on Mission*
- Tom Cheyney, *The Seven Pillars of Church Revitalization and Renewal*
- Mark Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches*
- Brian Croft, *Biblical Church Revitalization*
- Andrew Davis, *Revitalizer*
- Mark Hallock, *Replant Roadmap*
- Bill Henard, *Can These Bones Live?*
- Jeff Iorg, *Leading Major Change in Your Ministry*
- Thom Rainer, *Who Moved My Pulpit?*

The researcher also connected these men regularly on coaching calls and conversations.

The pastor revitalizer had an opportunity to express his present situation, and the Director of Missions was able to respond to their needs in various ways. The researcher also gave them an online learning tool and instructed them to watch specific segments before each week's lesson. The Cornerstone Bible Church in Port Jefferson, New York, hosted *The Church Revitalization Conference*. It had national leaders/speakers such as DA Horton, Micah Fries, Sam Rainer, Mark Clifton, Gary Moritz, Andy David, and Karl Vaters. The learnings from this conference were beneficial to all. Each week, the researcher led a peer to peer discussion on each of the competencies of high capacity leaders in church revitalization: having a compelling vision, maintaining a devoted work ethic, leading with contagious passion, and keeping a kingdom focus with a community context. Each lesson centered around the book of Nehemiah. Questions and discussion followed the

cohort. The six-week lessons' total time was one hour and a half each Monday night, with two hours of homework to support peer-to-peer learning. Prayer always became an anchor to the *Sons of Nehemiah* weekly meeting.

- b. National Leader Exposure- The researcher also involved the *Sons of Nehemiah* with personal interaction and exposure with national leaders in church revitalization. He was careful to engage the local and state leadership, as this team will play a valuable part in developing the *Sons of Nehemiah* church revitalization strategy in Montgomery. The following joined the group via Zoom on Monday nights:

- Dr. Ken Allen, State Revitalizer, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions
- Dr. Daryl Price, Director of Missions, Noonday Baptist Association, Atlanta, Georgia
- Dr. Mark Clifton, National Revitalizer, North American Mission Board
- Dr. Gary Moritz, Pastor Revitalizer, City United Church, Lunenburg, Massachusetts
- Rev. Dewayne Rembert, Pastor Replanter, Flatline Church at Chisholm, Montgomery, Alabama

On August 31, 2020, the *Sons of Nehemiah* concluded their cohort with a special steak dinner that included graduation with a certificate. Dr. Gary Moritz was the keynote speaker and commissioner. He challenged them to remember that upon this rock, Christ has built his church. The wonderful message inspired all the pastor revitalizers. In recent days, one of the men has been going through significant struggles in his church. He often speaks of the commissioning service and Dr. Moritz's challenge, "I will build my church."

Each of the *Sons of Nehemiah* and their church received an eagle award at the 139<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Montgomery Baptist Association on November 2, 2020. The eagle award is the MBA's highest award of excellence. These pastor revitalizers became the first class (class of 2020) of the *Sons of Nehemiah*, a church revitalization training cohort that will take place annually with the MBA. The researcher's DMin study, the leaders, and its success inspired the *Sons of Nehemiah* effort to be an ongoing program for associational work.

#### How Did the Intervention Plan Change the Problem?

The intervention enabled the pastor revitalizer to personally experience his congregation's felt needs and the present opportunities. The action plan allowed him to develop better skills in creating a compelling vision, having a stronger work ethic, leading with contagious passion, and understanding how to exegete his kingdom focus with community context. Personal coaching helped the pastor revitalize by hearing from his fellow peers and gaining insight into his strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. His national exposure with practitioners gave the pastor revitalizer a mental and emotional metric that enabled him to carry out his mission with clarity, experience, wisdom, and passion. Many of the pastor revitalizers have already given testimony of the personal inspiration and the challenge presented by individual coaching, peer to peer learning, and national exposure to leaders and their instruction. All of the above prayerfully resulted in the pastor revitalizing his leadership capacity from nominal to exceptional.

#### How Did the Researcher Inform or Involve Those in the Project?

The pastor revitalizer was part of a group of ten pastor revitalizers going through the "Sons of Nehemiah" project. The researcher recruited them mostly from the Montgomery Baptist Association, where the researcher is Director of Missions. The exception is an African American pastor and church who are National Baptists but under pre-watchcare for dual alignment into the

association. They were informed of the project and had full disclosure of what was going to occur with them and their congregations. Each signed a covenant to be the *Sons of Nehemiah* and carry out this task to the end. The researcher publicly honored these ten pastor revitalizers at the Montgomery Baptist Association's Annual Meeting with a "Sons of Nehemiah" eagle award after the project on November 2, 2020.

The pastor revitalizer assisted the researcher in selecting a specific legacy member or members. The researcher arranged for a time to interview and involve them in the project. The Director of Missions also honored their participation in the advancement of church revitalization in the River Region of Central Alabama.

The researcher did a random "people on the street" visit with community participants. These casual interviews confirmed that most were not aware of the church and did not have any personal experience with the congregation. All quantitative research gathered by the researcher for the project was an eminent domain. The researcher, who is also the Director of Missions, had access to the tools to collect such data.

#### Whose Approvals Needed to be Attained?

The approvals the researcher needed was the agreement of the ten pastor revitalizers along with their willingness to participate in the project. Also, the legacy members of the pastor revitalizer church gave their approval for interviews. The researcher contacted all outside coaches from national sources for official dates and an established strategy. All quantitative research was gathered easily by the researcher, who had access to such data.

#### How Did the Researcher Get the Participants' Consent and Other Resources?

The researcher personally contacted each of the ten pastor revitalizers by phone, Zoom, or personal visit to seek their approval to join the *Sons of Nehemiah*. The pastor helped the

researcher seek the recruitment of the legacy members. All signed a letter of informed consent or gave their permission orally for the researcher (witnessed by the pastor) to place on the document (see Appendix A). The researcher lives in the community, knows most of the participants, and has all other handy resources for quantitative research. He did not need anything else or require any other personal preparation to gather the material and organize the interview questions for future visits.

#### **What Were the Current Truths Regarding the Problem to be Addressed?**

Though all are at varying degrees of leadership capacity, all the pastor revitalizers desire to become better leaders. They welcomed the fellowship, the learning, and the opportunity to change personally so their church can change radically.

The churches that took part in the study need church revitalization. All have been on the decline for a season of time. Though at varying degrees, there is a concern about their survivability in the distant future. They all welcomed the learning and the opportunity given their pastor to strengthen his leadership skills to help them with church revitalization.

The partners in this project were glad to help. In speaking about the thesis project theory, ALSBOM, NAMB, and other national groups were more than willing to assist these church revitalizers. They were also a great asset to the research and an inspiration to the novice leader.

#### **Intervention Design**

The researcher started May 11, 2020, and concluded September 30, 2020, with the thesis project's intervention/implementation portion. The Institutional Review Board gave permissions and exemption from further review on June 25, 2020 (See Appendix Y). The study happened in three phases:



- A. Phase One: Recruitment of Ten Pastor Revitalizers and their Churches for the Study  
(May 11 to May 31, 2020)
- B. Phase Two: Intervention Section of the Study: “Look, Think, and Act”  
(June 1 to August 31, 2020)
- C. Phase Three: Implementation Section of the Study: Analysis Review with Exit Interviews  
(September 1 to September 30, 2020)

Note: Presentations of gratitude to the *Sons of Nehemiah* who make up the ten pastor revitalizers and their churches, took place at the 139<sup>th</sup> Annual Homecoming of the Montgomery Baptist Association, Monday, November 2, 2020, 6:30 pm, Taylor Road Baptist Church, 1685 Taylor Road, Montgomery, Alabama 36117.

Phase One: Recruitment of Ten Pastor Revitalizers and their Churches for the Study  
(May 11 to May 31, 2020)

The researcher recruited ten pastors and their churches for the *Sons of Nehemiah* study. Their names and the churches' names and contact information are in pseudonym form (see Appendix B). The researcher also recruited two other analysts for triangulation purposes to review the data and project at large (see names and contact information in Appendix C). These team members are qualified analysts with years of experience working with churches to revitalize and coach pastors to raise their leadership capacity level. Besides the researcher, Dr. Ken Allen is also a former Director of Missions and long-time pastor of churches in need of revitalization. He is presently the lead strategist for church revitalization at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Dr. Bob Burton is a long-time pastor missionary and member of the North American Mission Board staff. He presently serves as a lead strategist for the pipeline renewal and church planting for NAMB.

Phase Two: Intervention Section of the Study: “Look, Think, and Act”  
(June 1 to August 31, 2020)

The researcher carried out the study's intervention section using the advanced action research principles of “Look, Think, and Act.”

1. Look: The Gathering of Qualitative and Quantitative Data

Qualitative Data Gathered in the “Look” Action Research

The researcher interviewed each of the ten pastor revitalizers to gather data on their personal and professional history and their study expectations. The researcher asked such qualitative action questions yielded answers to their background (i.e., born and raised, salvation and calling to ministry testimony, family growing up, marriage, family now, hobbies, interests). He also examined their educational background (i.e., undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate, emphasis of studies while in school, career CEU's, any study on church revitalization).

The researcher studied their career history as a pastor, starting from their calling to present. He helped them to reflect on their best time as a pastor as well as their worse time. The researcher examined why the pastor revitalizer decided to come to their present church and reviewed how they think they are making a difference. The pastor revitalizer spoke of his family and their support of his dreams and ambitions.

Finally, the researcher examined the pastor revitalizer regarding his symphonic view of life. From a holistic perspective, how is he physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, relationally? Through a church revitalizer assessment, the researcher examined on a scale of 1-5 where they stood concerning their discipline of having a compelling vision, devoted work ethic, contagious passion, and a kingdom focus with a community context? The interview's conclusion examined their expectations of the *Sons of Nehemiah* study and how a coach can help him improve as a pastor revitalizer (see Appendix D).

The researcher gathered qualitative data in this season of action research by looking to a legacy member or members of each pastor revitalizer and interviewing them. He also spent time looking into the deep history of the church and its legacy. Some of the churches have been in existence for at least 159 years. The legacy team spoke about any present conflict or if there was a history of chronic conflict. The leaders pinpointed the beginning of the church's decline and attempted to explain why this took place (i.e., environmental, relational, conflict, etc.).

The legacy team communicated why the church chose their present pastor and gave as much history regarding their current pastor to the church. They commented about any legendary pastors from the past and what made them legendary. Finally, the team commented on if the church family had a present outlook that was optimistic or grown complacent and resolved to the church's potential loss and legacy. These specific questions are available in Appendix E.

The researcher asked the diverse group of leaders for a S.W.O.T. analysis of their congregation (i.e., Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). Also, the legacy group shared their opinion on how the community perceived them. The S.W.O.T. analysis and legacy members' questionnaire are available in Appendix G.

The final qualitative data gathered was from the perspective of non-church members. These were done randomly and casually by the researcher. He examined each community by asking a simple question regarding the church within a mile and, in some cases, within view of their place of business. The question was, "Do you know anything about the church over there (and the researcher pointed). They responded in generalities, indicating not an intimate understanding of this biblical community.

### Quantitative Data to Be Gathered in the “Look” Action Research

The researcher gathered quantitative data from each of the churches and the River Region of Central Alabama. He secured the Southern Baptist Convention (2008-2019) data on the pastor revitalizer’s church. It gave information regarding attendance, giving, budgets, baptisms, and other pertinent information. Demographics and psychographics data represented a one-mile/five-mile radius of the church, and the latest census of Montgomery, Alabama, was gathered (Appendix K, L, M).

The following is a quick fact narrative of Montgomery, as identified by the Chamber of Commerce: Montgomery is the second-largest city in Alabama, after Birmingham, and is the 115th largest in the United States. The Montgomery Metropolitan Statistical Area had a 2010 estimated population of 374,536. It is the fourth-largest in the state and 136th among United States metropolitan areas. The population demographic is 60.6% African American, 33.3% White, 3.0% Hispanic, 2.1% Asian, 1.0% other.<sup>126</sup>

Further, pre-assessments reflected the pastor revitalizer’s leadership skills. The first was from the North American Mission Board and pertained to their replanting skills. It was for information only and directly tied them to NAMB. The second pre-assessment came from the Montgomery Baptist Association and examined the leadership characteristics of the pastor revitalizer. Finally, some of the ten pastor revitalizers took the D.I.S.C. profile, utilizing Merrick Rosenbert and Daniel Silvert, *Taking Flight!*.<sup>127</sup> Those who took the profile demonstrated they were supportive leaders. It became clear in examining the profiles why some do not project

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<sup>126</sup> Quick Fact Narrative, Montgomery Chamber of Commerce  
([https://www.google.com/search?q=quck+facts+regarding+montgomery+alabama&rlz=1C1SQJL\\_enUS843US843&oq=quck+facts+regarding+montgomery+alabama&aqs=chrome..69i57j33i22i29i30.6537j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=quck+facts+regarding+montgomery+alabama&rlz=1C1SQJL_enUS843US843&oq=quck+facts+regarding+montgomery+alabama&aqs=chrome..69i57j33i22i29i30.6537j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)), 10.18.20.

<sup>127</sup> Merrick Rosenbert and Daniel Silvert, *Taking Flight! Mast the DISC Styles to Transform Your Career, Your Relationships... Your Life* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Taking Flight Partners, LLC, 2013).

themselves as high capacity leaders. Many of the *Sons of Nehemiah* are quieter and not perceived as charismatic leaders. Thus, the perception reflects a lack of influence and the lack of training and coaching (See Appendices N, O, P).

## 2. Think: The Analysis of Gathered Data

The researcher gathered the qualitative and quantitative data collected during the “Look” analysis and began the process of assimilating and interpreting the material to address the problem with a sustainable solution. He analyzed the qualitative data collected from the S.W.O.T. analysis and the pastor revitalizers and legacy members' interviews. The researcher compared this with the quantitative data gathered on the community, the annual church profile, the pastor revitalizer assessments, and D.I.S.C. profiles.

In the “Think” phase, the researcher looked for identifying marks that reflected both positives and negatives. He attempted better to understand the pastor revitalizer and his present leadership competencies. He knew the church much better as a result of the internal audit and interviews. The information assisted the researcher’s analysis. It also helped the pastor revitalizer and the church to understand each other and themselves better.

## 3. Act: The Implementation of Sustainable Solutions

### A Personal Coaching Strategy

The researcher had enough information from the data to work with each of the pastor revitalizers in developing a personal coaching strategy for each, based on the previous research and the following competencies:

First, the pastor revitalizer must have a compelling vision. The researcher worked with the pastor revitalizer to shape his vision for the church and learn how to communicate it best. The pastor revitalizer was encouraged to read biographies of visionary leaders such as Ronald

Reagan, Winston Churchill, and Billy Graham and such biblical characters as Nehemiah to discover the principles of speaking to a crowd for motivation and change. The pastor revitalizer also undertook the D.I.S.C. profile to examine his leadership style.

The pastor revitalizer had a personal retreat with his Bible and asked the Holy Spirit to build a compelling vision for his church based on the foundation of the Word of God as well as techniques he had learned from evaluating great leaders of vision.

The pastor revitalizer presented his vision to his peers in their learning laboratory. He will now take his vision and begin relating it to his church family for the appropriate approvals and implementation.

Second, the pastor revitalizer must have a devoted work ethic. The researcher worked with the pastor revitalizer in evaluating his time management and other work habits. He learned to set S.M.A.R.T. goals (Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely). The student kept a daily journal for two weeks, with an hour-by-hour examination of everything the pastor revitalizer did with his time. Upon completion, the pastor revitalizer examined his time management and work habits in light of his lay leaders and practices. He looked for both strengths in his schedule as well as weaknesses. The pastor revitalizer evaluated the new patterns he needs to make to strengthen his work discipline.

Third, the pastor revitalizer must have a contagious passion. The researcher worked with the pastor revitalizer on developing the leadership skill of passion that ignites others to go forward. In this module, the student read leadership books that relate to motivation. He examined such national motivational leaders as John Maxwell and Zig Ziegler. The student worked with his peers to discuss motivation techniques from the pulpit and their ordinary leadership course.

He presented the analysis in his peer-to-peer learning laboratory and discovered common traits that motivated the ten pastor revitalizers in this study module.

Fourth, the pastor revitalizer must have a kingdom focus with community context. The pastor revitalizer learned to utilize missional tools to discover how to exegete and extrapolate his community appropriately. He gathered the information given to him and began building a strategy to bring the gospel to his culture through mass and personal evangelism. He will seek the necessary approvals for implementing the community strategy into the life of his church.

#### A National Coaching Exposure

The researcher was able to work with each of the pastor revitalizers in developing a national coaching exposure for all, based on the previous research and the following competencies:

First, the pastor revitalizer must have a compelling vision. The dialogue with such national leaders as Dr. Mark Clifton, Dr. Ken Allen, Dr. Gary Moritz, Dr. Daryl Price, and Rev. Dewayne Rembert regarding tools to develop a compelling vision, inspired the pastor revitalizers. Clifton especially brought up how to have a compelling vision. The team also learned from the National Church Revitalization Conference held via the web.

Second, the pastor revitalizer must have a devoted work ethic. The pastor revitalizer enjoyed the dialogue with such national leaders as Dr. Mark Clifton, Dr. Ken Allen, Dr. Gary Moritz, Dr. Daryl Price, and Rev. Dewayne Rembert regarding tools to develop a devoted work ethic. Price spoke to a person's spiritual and personal plan book. The team also learned from the National Church Revitalization Conference held via the web.

Third, the pastor revitalizer must have a contagious passion. The pastor revitalizer enjoyed the dialogue with such national leaders as Dr. Mark Clifton, Dr. Ken Allen, Dr. Gary

Moritz, Dr. Daryl Price, and Rev. Dewayne Rembert regarding tools to develop a contagious passion. Moritz inspired the men with a challenge of how Jesus builds the church, not pastors. He related this to contagious passion. The team also learned from the National Church Revitalization Conference held via the web.

Fourth, the pastor revitalizer must have a kingdom focus with community context. The pastor revitalizer enjoyed the dialogue with such national leaders as Dr. Mark Clifton, Dr. Ken Allen, Dr. Gary Moritz, Dr. Daryl Price, and Rev. Dewayne Rembert regarding tools to develop a community strategy for their kingdom focus. Clifton reminded the pastor revitalizers of the imperative that they are a community church, not a church in the community. The team also learned from the National Church Revitalization Conference held via the web.

Finally, the researcher reported the analysis to each of the churches, suggesting how the church may work with the pastor revitalizer to renew their church family. As Director of Missions, the researcher presented an eagle award to each of the *Sons of Nehemiah* and their church at the Montgomery Baptist Association's annual meeting, with words of appreciation and affirmation for their participation.

### **Implementation of the Intervention Design**

#### **Phase Three:** Implementation Section of the Study: Analysis Review with Exit Interviews (September 1 to September 30, 2020)

The implementation of the intervention design included exit interviews from the trial. The gathering of analysis and bringing closure to the study took place from September 1 to September 30, 2020. All cross triangulation between the researcher, insider, and outsider took place in the same season of time and their full review of the thesis project in November.

The qualitative data is not looking for a change in the pastor revitalizer that measures success quantitatively. Instead, it is a qualitative change felt in the pastor revitalizer's heart. The



change will motivate confidence in oneself, in the pastor revitalizer's Spirit-filled journey, along with his heightened awareness of the following: a compelling vision, a devoted work ethic, a contagious passion, and a kingdom focus with community context. The pastor revitalizer's heartfelt change would then motivate the church toward revitalization. The study's completion did result in the thesis statement: If ten pastor revitalizers with nominal leadership capacity subject themselves to high-level leadership training, then a higher level of leadership capacity in the ten pastor revitalizers should be the anticipated result.

Many of the pastor revitalizers have commented on how the study helped them. They particularly expressed praise for the peer-to-peer learning and the national exposure to great leaders of revitalization. The study's healthy qualifier will be a pastor revitalizer who builds lifetime habits that lead him from being a nominal to an exceptional leader. The church will bring glory to God by being the beneficiary of this high capacity leader.

Each pastor revitalizer experienced an exit interview in this month's phase. He and the researcher dialogued about the four competencies, his personal experience with his church, and notable changes in the congregation's life. The pastor revitalizer acknowledged improvement in setting S.M.A.R.T. goals. Finally, the leader reflected upon how he has led the church to know their community better (see Appendix I).

The qualitative and quantitative intervention analysis of all pastor revitalizers and churches in the study were reviewed for completion by the following triangulation team:

1. The Researcher: Rev. Neal Hughes, Director of Missions, Montgomery Baptist Association, Montgomery, Alabama
2. The Insider: Dr. Ken Allen, Church Health Strategist, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, Prattville, Alabama

3. The Outsider: Dr. Bob Burton, Midwest Regional Equipper, Send Network, The North American Mission Board

Each church received a gift of the thesis project. The pastor revitalizer and the church received an eagle award to complete the *Sons of Nehemiah* study during the Montgomery Baptist Association's annual meeting on November 2, 2020.

After completing the data gathering during the intervention, including the exit interviews and final comments from other analysts, the researcher reported all findings in chapter four of the thesis project, "Results."

## Chapter 4

### Results

#### Introduction

The question is, “What were the results of addressing the problem?” In this chapter, one will examine a more careful analysis of the interviews, especially with the legacy members of the *Sons of Nehemiah*. The researcher will also demonstrate the pastor revitalizers' skill sets, as discovered in the pastor revitalizer assessment and the D.I.S.C. profile.

Evaluation that leads to results is a biblical process. Doctor Luke regularly supplies the reader with progress reports and church updates in Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1,7; 9:31, 35, 42; 11:21, 24; 14:21; 16:5; 17:12. Paul evaluates the ministers and deacons in 1 Timothy 2. He calls for self-examination in 1 Corinthians 11:28. Many times through the Bible, there is a recording noting the results of the mighty hand of God.<sup>128</sup> The following is an evaluation of the problem that produced results that quantified the thesis regarding the *Sons of Nehemiah*.

#### The Results of the Problem Addressed

The project addressed the problem that many pastors who serve Montgomery congregations that require church revitalization are not known or expected to be high capacity leaders or trained revitalizers. The research produced many interviews with both the *Sons of Nehemiah* and their congregations. The interviews were with members of the ten churches who had a long tenure at their church. For some, they were above the age of seventy and retired. Most were presently key leaders and considered highly regarded as far as knowledge and love for the pastor and their congregation. The researcher did not encounter a time when those interviewed used the moments to “get the preacher” or say something caustic or damaging regarding the

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<sup>128</sup> Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 304.

pastor's leadership and the present church. They honored Christ with the interview and are deeply committed to the church's success and revitalization. During a few of the interviews, the pastors insisted on being present. It is the researcher's opinion that their presence did not sway a discussion or restrict the transparency goals of the interview. The pastor played an active role in the dialogue and genuinely supported what was being said by the laity.

Each question asked to the legacy members produced a metric of results for analysis:

1. **Tell about the history of the church?** The River Region of Central Alabama produced white settlements in the early 1800s. It is not unusual to have churches that began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and are still actively engaged in ministry today. Montgomery's city is bordered by the rivers, making growth patterns eastward due to the three rivers and the swampland near the waterways (similar to a peninsula). Therefore, the practices of the history of the churches interviewed reflect an eastern migration. Out of ten interviews, three churches gave birth in the 1800s, three in the 1930s, one in the 1960s, and three in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. An interesting tidbit was how all the African American churches birthed in the 1900s played a significant role in the city's civil rights movement and the country.
2. **What were the greatest joys and challenges?** The joys seemed to always fit around either the dedication of a new building that represented growth and health, or a significant pastor who had tenure in the church. Every church was one hundred percent that their most significant challenge is COVID-19 and how it affects the church's future.
3. **What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats?** Though one can find these general answers in table three located on page 65, the researcher has reproduced it again in the "Results" chapter for the reader's ease. Each qualifies as urban/suburban, rural, and ethnic divisions:

<b>Table Three: S.W.O.T. Analysis of Montgomery Baptist Churches in Study</b> <b><i>Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats</i></b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	
○ Urban/Suburban (RBC, CHBC, PRBC, COPR)- Faithfulness of God’s people who are attending, students of the word, facilities, location, adequate parking, beautiful sanctuary, fellowship with meals, koinonia, people take care of one another, mission givers, wonderful pastor, and staff	
○ Rural (LBC, SCBC)- Love between members, wonderful pastor, contributions are still substantial, a real sense of unity in the church, though small	
○ Ethnic (SBC, ANBC, GNFBC, SJBC)- Membership, wonderful pastor, dedicated group, praying church, fellowship with a meal, koinonia, pastor’s vision, genuinely caring for one another, contributions	
<b>Weaknesses</b>	
○ Urban/Suburban (RBC, CHBC, PRBC, COPR)- Lack of people, lack of young people, apathy, COVID crisis, location, church, and name looks old, lack of understanding about spiritual gifts, members having to do many jobs	
○ Rural (LBC, SCBC)- Bad theology gets in small churches, lack of families in the community	
○ Ethnic (SBC, ANBC, GNFBC, SJBC)- Christian education, spiritual maturity, great faith, lack of families, lack of job network opportunities, no building, COVID	
<b>Opportunities</b>	
○ Urban/Suburban (RBC, CHBC, PRBC, COPR)- Mature dependence on God, a closer walk with Christ, feeding of God’s word, more racial diversity in leadership, senior citizen meal distribution, outdoor events, a reset moment due to COVID	
○ Rural (LBC, SCBC)- country related evangelism events, marketing the “church in the wildwood,” preaching and singing, virtual ministry	
○ Ethnic (SBC, ANBC, GNFBC, SJBC)- Increase in missions due to COVID (i.e., Food Distribution), family growth, generational support	
<b>Threats</b>	
○ Urban/Suburban (RBC, CHBC, PRBC, COPR)- People dying, leaving and numbers declining, budget decrease, major building issues, lack of fresh leadership, loss of moral compass in society and its threat on the church	
○ Rural (LBC, SCBC)- No young people, one family away from closure, a perpetual decline of the farming community	
○ Ethnic (SBC, ANBC, GNFBC, SJBC)- Becoming complacent, laziness and not attending, tithing, or supporting due to pandemic,	

4. **When the community looks toward the church, what do they see?** Each legacy member expressed what they would hope the community would see: welcome, love, salvation opportunity, resources for them and their family, and hope that comes from

worship where an opportunity is given to know God and love Him more. All the interviewees admitted being out of touch with their community and felt that most would not see today what they had hoped they would see from their perspective. The research supports the comment when interviewing community observers. Most outsiders did not know a church was there and were not aware of its function or purpose for those in the community.

**5. How would the legacy member advise the pastor on how to grow the church?**

Everyone expressed great love and appreciation for their pastor. All were concerned that he did too much and suggested that he delegate more to others his various responsibilities.

**Observations from the Laity Interviews**

From a laity perspective, the observance of the researcher regarding addressing the problem of low capacity leadership was:

1. Most of the legacy members were realistic, hoping for a solid return to a more incredible day. They were not enthusiastic that this could happen, regardless of who is leading. They seem to be overall content and resigned to the fate of decline that would inevitably lead to closure.
2. Though all the churches could share a recent community activity that they led or participated in, none of the churches could give specific details of any long-term evangelistic strategy that engaged them specifically in their community. All had a name of at least one from the community they are discipling, namely a child or young person. No one could share any strategic discipleship plan that reached out intentionally to the lost of their community for evangelism and discipleship.

3. The pastor, overall, has lost his enthusiasm for being a change agent to the church. Only the newer ones have such a dream. Though loyal and faithful, the laity have mostly resigned to the imminent fate of these times. None of the pastors had S.M.A.R.T. goals to lead their people but reacted mainly to the present-day issues and managed accordingly.

The pastor revitalizers, as a whole, needed more training for church revitalization. Their assessments and D.I.S.C. profile reflected that they have an excellent aptitude and incredible shepherding skills, but their D.I.S.C. portrays them as supportive influencers. There was not one of the *Sons of Nehemiah* who led with having a dominant or influential personality. Most were systematic and supporting leaders. The analysis would reveal that they would be the people who would “get down in the weeds” regarding a problem. They would analyze issues to the point of losing any direction and solution foresight. One might suggest that the pastor revitalizer have support who can help carry the vision and the charisma needed to lead in an aggressive way required for revitalization. He will need to work as a team much more than the DI’s or those with dominant or influential personalities.

Interestingly, all of the pastor revitalizers scored high on MBA’s pastor revitalizer assessment. On a scale of 1-5, they all were in the four range. When comparing this assessment with the D.I.S.C. profile, one would suggest that these pastor revitalizers have the skill and abilities to be a great leader but do not have the charisma to communicate as a confident leader of vision and passion effectively. The revitalizer can earn people’s confidence not only by working hard but also by becoming an expert in community exegesis and community ministry. His supportive/systematic personality would help gather facts and develop strategies to evangelize their community effectively. He will need his team to help him communicate the plan while winning over the doubting and more reserved.

## The Results of the Tested Thesis

The thesis was if ten pastor revitalizers with nominal leadership capacity (scale 2/3 on a 1-5 margin) subject themselves to high-level leadership training which focuses on such skill improvements as having a more compelling vision, a devoted work ethic, a contagious passion, and a kingdom focus that has a community missiology strategy within their church context, then a higher level of leadership capacity (scale 4/5 on a 1-5 margin) in the ten pastor revitalizers should be the anticipated result. The result favored the thesis, demonstrating a higher level of leadership from the training and inspiration experience.

The ten *Sons of Nehemiah* are deeply devoted men of God. Their holiness is evident, and their faithful commitment to their church demonstrates their love for the Lord and His people. What they lack in revitalization skills can be remedied by continuing to avail themselves of mentors and outside leadership. They made significant strides in their review of the information given at the Revitalization Conference. They deepened their skills also with peer to peer examination and book reviews. But perhaps the most significant change and inspiration to all was the weekly connection with national leaders. The men continue to speak of the learnings they experienced from their lectures and transparency of these national leaders.

If these men continue to seek mentors and avail themselves to national leadership, they have the intellectual aptitude and the spiritual depth to become level five leaders. Their disciplines will mark the high capacity of their leadership. The research is complete, the information given, and the encouragement received in the thesis study has given all ten men a chance to succeed in their churches with revitalization and influence other pastors in the journey.

The *Sons of Nehemiah* have already demonstrated an elevation in their leadership since the season of training and instruction. The following table reports the results and confirmation of



the thesis: If ten pastor revitalizers with nominal leadership capacity (scale 2/3 on a 1-5 margin) subject themselves to high-level leadership training which focuses on such skill improvements as having a more compelling vision, a devoted work ethic, a contagious passion, and a kingdom focus that has a community missiology strategy within their church context, then a higher level of leadership capacity (scale 4/5 on a 1-5 margin) in the ten pastor revitalizers should be the anticipated result. Table four reflects a summary of each of the *Sons of the Nehemiah* regarding the results of their training:

<b>Table Four: The Thesis Results of Training and Instruction with the <i>Sons of Nehemiah</i></b>
<p><b>Son One, RBC:</b> The pastor revitalizer led the people to stay safe during the COVID season while providing an excellent worship service via Facebook with his staff. He also led the church by calling a new worship leader in these challenging times of transitioning back to the main worship venue. He showed significant effort in <u>compelling vision</u> and a <u>devoted work ethic</u>.</p>
<p><b>Son Two, PRBC:</b> The pastor revitalizer not only led the church through the COVID season by meeting outside so they could relate better to the community, but he also led the congregation to accept, welcome, and donate much of their property for the use of the first Southern Baptist Chinese Church in Alabama. He has mentored the Chinese church planter from Mississippi. The congregation has graciously enabled this planter to have the former worship area and the former pastorium, neither of which has been used for ten years. He showed significant effort in <u>compelling vision</u>, <u>devoted work ethic</u>, <u>contagious passion</u>, and <u>kingdom focus</u>.</p>
<p><b>Son Three, COPR:</b> The pastor revitalizer has shown character and integrity during his life that is presently filled with physical pain and spiritual struggle. Despite these facts, he has led</p>

the church to transition to a much better worship facility. He has inspired the church to continue to adopt an unreached people group in the community tied to the Guatemalan country yet have Indian dialects where they do not speak Spanish. He has also managed the finances by removing unnecessary expenses such as a storefront office where the rental was astronomical. The pastor revitalizer has led through two major church issues and has done so with courage and dignity. He has led despite five surgeries on his back and continued constant, debilitating pain. Son Three continues to show all four competencies: a compelling vision, a devoted work ethic, a contagious passion, and a kingdom focus.

**Son Four, CHBC:** The pastor revitalizer has pushed forward despite being the new pastor in a COVID season. He has faced obstacles with grace and kindness and recently led the congregation to focus on their community with a fully engaged Fall festival. What was unique about it was the crowd met under COVID rules and the church was relevant to the culture by using a skilled rap artist from the region. Despite many traditionalists, he has demonstrated a unique ability. Like Nehemiah, to “stay on the wall,” leading the people with contagious passion and kingdom focus.

**Son Five, LBC:** The pastor revitalizer, despite surgeries and sickness, designed a way for his congregation to meet faithfully during the COVID season. He has utilized phone conference in an area that does not have the Internet. It has adequately met their needs. The pastor revitalizer had also led with inspiration by being a key leader of disaster relief for the association. The involvement has brought a sense of pride to his church community, knowing it is their pastor who has deployed chainsaw crews on several occasions to the damage experienced from hurricanes and tornadoes in Alabama and this area of the South in 2020.

He has shown grace and focus, demonstrating a devoted work ethic to the pastorate, and presenting a compelling vision that is larger than the church.

**Son Six, ANBC:** The pastor revitalizer has led the church to focus on international students by caring for them through the association food ministry. He has also used the association's media leader's services to develop his website and produce a way for him to be on Facebook with his church family. These have been considerable accomplishments in such a traditional community of faith. The pastor revitalizer has demonstrated compelling vision, and a kingdom focus to accomplish such a task.

**Son Seven, SBC:** The pastor revitalizer has led the congregation to feed their community during this COVID-19 season, using the River Region Rolling Store as a resource. He has also led his flock to consider becoming a Southern Baptist Church, dually aligned with the National Baptist Convention. The pastor revitalizer's actions has taken compelling vision, contagious passion, and a kingdom focus with community context for the congregation to push out of tradition into a new wineskin.

**Son Eight, GNFBC:** The pastor revitalizer gets the "star pupil" award for his eagerness to learn from others, not only in class but in many additional meetings held by the association. He boldly attempted to lead the church to accept a modular building gift, which would have afforded them much-needed space. Though the congregation did not receive the facility at this time, the pastor revitalizer showed courage and leadership to attempt to move the church with a compelling vision and contagious passion.

**Son Nine, SJBC:** The pastor revitalizer led the congregation to do unique things in the difficult time of COVID-19. He also led them to regain their belief in the office of the pastor. Trust has been severely damaged in the past by one of his predecessors. More trust has

happened in recent days as he led them through the understanding and negotiations of a neighboring business using money and power to attempt to influence the church into making a decision that would tilt to the businessman's favor. The pastor revitalizer kept the people informed and represented them well, and the issues were resolved for all parties, keeping the neighbor as a friend. He has demonstrated all four competencies of a compelling vision, devoted work ethic, contagious passion, and a kingdom focus with community context.

**Son Ten, SCBC:** The pastor revitalizer has led with grace despite a difficult theological rift in a small church environment. He has preached faithfully, loved everyone with dignity, and showed incredible statesmanship that, like Nehemiah, has returned people to "building the wall." He has also led them to be more presentable to the community with an expensive yet practical signage. He has demonstrated compelling vision and a devoted work ethic by working tirelessly to get people focused on the great commission work.

### A Prescription for Each Pastor Revitalizer

Analysis of each church and its pastor revitalizer compels the researcher to give a summary analysis and a possible recommendation to enhance the revitalization of the church and their community. This analysis not only comes from the research of the thesis project but the researcher's forty-five years of ministry in church revitalization.

**Son One, RBC:** The RBC is a congregation with a massive facility and a small congregation. Their pastor was called to the church two years ago to lead them in church revitalization. The church has a rich legacy of great preachers and evangelistic programs. In the past, they would host two services and eight hundred people with multiple staff members. Today, they have one hundred on any given Sunday, a full-time pastor, church administrator, and

ministry assistant. The rest of their staff are few and part-time. The church is highly programmatic and anticipates a renaissance of yesterday's numbers and blessings. The pastor and people have enjoyed the company of one another but differ in leadership philosophy and strategic planning. While a good shepherd, the pastor struggles to gain footing as the congregation leader with a compelling vision. Upon analysis, their committee-run church is archaic and time-consuming. Common to the South, both parties tend to cooperate on a surface level but do not join in voice and heart toward a common goal. The passive-aggressive behavior has contributed to a significant decline and continues to hinder the church's ability to discover a new day without radical change. Funding is beginning to follow the decline and departure of the congregation.

Recommendation: The researcher has concluded that radical change will have to occur, or the church will need to consider transitioning toward a replant with another SBC congregation. A team approach would enhance the leadership ability, bringing strategically the "Ephesians 4" style that accompanies synergetic direction such as apostolic (visionary leader), prophetic (administrative leader), shepherd (pastoral leader), teacher (gifted pulpiteer leader), and evangelist (mission leader). Working in concert with one another, with an appointed leader of leaders, could give the necessary ingredient that would halt the decline with such gifted and synergetic leadership. Such a change would require much prayer, bold courage, humble willingness among the staff and other leaders, and real desperation to look beyond self for the community's sake and seek the advancement of the kingdom of God. The biblical approach could lead to a renewal of the people to be all the Lord desires for them and their community, producing church revitalization and a stop in the congregation's tragic decline.

**Son Two, PRBC:** The PRBC has been in existence for well over a century. They have a long history of serving the rural community. They experienced some fast growth with the change of their community as it became incorporated. A particular pastor's calling led them away from a growth pattern to more of an internal, "house church" like atmosphere. The strategy shift produced a decline in attendance from an average of two hundred to fifteen today. Their present pastor arrived in Montgomery as an engineer in the automotive industry. In their search for a church home, they became members at PRBC. At present, the pastor revitalizer and his wife are the only African Americans in the church. After a few years of being a strong lay leader, the church called their first African American pastor to lead them toward church revitalization. SON TWO has a lot of energy, is full of ideas, and has a gift of service and hospitality. He has led the church well with faithfulness toward caring for the flock. He has also slowly introduced ways to grow the church and develop a more substantial reputation in their community.

**Recommendation:** The church suffers from the theology left behind by the former pastor. They seem to resist change. The present pastor is helping them change, even lately, with the first Chinese Baptist Church's acceptance in their building and pastorium. Their community is the fastest-growing area of Central Alabama. It would be necessary for this pastor to continue to get his congregation ready for more people. Focus on exterior projects like the school next door. Set up a "welcome wagon" to the hundreds of homes being built within a mile of the church. Resist any defeatist spirit and try new things, even if they do not work. Get the people expecting great things from God and attempting great things for God. Set deliberate S.M.A.R.T. goals that are strongly evangelistic and discipleship centered. Grow quarterly by five families and set goals toward this fact. Be aggressive in the preparations, not allowing anyone to distract the church from the kingdom business that comes with such a community opportunity.

**Son Three, COPR:** The COPR is a relatively new congregation, having been started by the planter/pastor revitalizer. They have been in a storefront for most of their existence and have recently attained the opportunity to share space with a local high school and their fine arts center. This step has allowed them significantly more room and a deepening influence in the community because of their location and position with the local schools. The COPR was also able to close their offices and move into home offices. This strategic decision has helped them financially, but to some degree, it has caused them to lose their identity in their community. In recent days, the congregation has faced three uphill battles: (1) The coronavirus has robbed them of their identity as they moved into their new location simultaneously as the pandemic forced the church to shelter in place. They have since returned to worshipping corporately but have not returned to its former strength and numbers; (2) The pastor has been gravely ill with multiple surgeries to his back. The church and the pastor revitalizer fully understand how many issues beyond their control have taken a toll on their growth trajectory and plans; (3) The church had to handle some church discipline issues that have resulted in a few departures from supporting families. The result has been a significant loss, financially and numerically.

**Recommendation:** The pastor revitalizer is going to be the key to a replant of their biblical community. He will need to find possible solutions to the above issues, placing the church on a positive evangelism and discipleship trajectory. Two areas to consider are Southern Baptist's "Who's Your One" campaign and "What's Your Mile?" effort. Going back to the evangelism basics is always the remedy for a struggling church. The COPR has a bright future. Such a strategy will enable them to secure a better footing after dealing with the struggles of 2020.

**Son Four, CHBC:** The CHBC has had a rich legacy in Montgomery. Once considered a flagship church to the Montgomery Baptist Association, the church has faithfully committed to missions and has a long history of outreach connected to the high school across the street and two HUD towers that they built, owned, and supervised until recent days. The congregation has a fair dispersion of age disparity. But their apathy has not produced a clear vision for the next steps in some time. Recently, they called a young pastor during the COVID-19 season. He is bright, energetic, loving. The young pastor has a DMin and is soon to have a PhD, all from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife have three children. Energy has filled the church again. Sadly, the COVID-19 led to a debate among the congregation regarding whether to wear a mask or not wear a mask. The conflict has resulted in loss of membership. The new pastor also cannot readily know everyone because of COVID-19 restrictions. These issues have proven to be a real hindrance to revitalization, with many of the older leaders departing and presently visiting other churches. In the right way, the pastor and church family recently had a block party that pushed a lot of energy and excitement among the remaining congregation and community. The pastor revitalizer appears to have gained encouragement and a renewed spirit, enabling them to move forward to more incredible things.

**Recommendation:** The community is dramatically different than it was when CHBC was a leader in the city. The church needs to exegete their community properly, discover their real needs, then seek strategic ways to respond. They need to build momentum by sharing their church facilities with a healthy, mission-minded African American church. They can worship separately but have shared goals when it comes to ministering to their community. From the survey, let them aggressively respond together with the other church and be obedient and faithful to community evangelism and discipleship. Also, utilize advertisement to attract people to their



worship services. Discover a uniqueness about the gathering of believers and expose the evangelistic attraction. See the location as an asset, not a liability. It is positioned right in the middle of Montgomery's two busiest streets and only one mile from the interstate.

**Son Five, LBC:** This rural church has a long and rich history dating back to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They have weathered rough storms before, both physically and spiritually. For example, during the depression, they had to close the church because they did not have the money to manage their needs. Shortly after reopening, they experienced great revival and recorded their most considerable growth period from 1940 through the 1960s. Unfortunately, the farming community's change has brought a spiral of decline in families living near the LBC community. They have a strong pastor revitalizer who has a long and healthy history with them. They love each other, but both groups are equally pragmatists, so it is hard to secure a bold and daring vision with “Cs” leadership (D.I.S.C. profile).

**Recommendation:** It would be healthy for someone beyond the pastor to lead the church in daring visions and let the pastor tie to this visionary and passionate leadership to gather the church body toward the goal. This person may be connected to the association, as this is a frequented pattern in some rural churches. Let the leadership be consistent with healthy goals, build wins, and make S.M.A.R.T. goals so the congregation can embrace the change. An additional idea is to look for what would be attractive to the community at large. They will probably have to reach toward the city lights. Use this attraction to get people gathered on Sunday regularly. People will come to a “church in the wildwood” as it brings memories. Let them discover a church on fire once they get there.

**Son Six, ANBC:** The predominantly Korean congregation began to have a multicultural Asian congregation of Koreans, Filipinos, Laotians, and Indonesians in the late twentieth

century. As a whole, there was a large population of Koreans in Montgomery (due to North America's Hyundai plant locating to Montgomery). Each of the other nationalities have come for various reasons, such as refugees from the Vietnam War or arriving for domestic assistance in America. The pastor revitalizer planted the church, with plans to speak English in the worship service, assuming there would be enough second generation of each nation (with at least a Korean translator). The idea worked for a season but began to run into human obstacles. The Koreans wanted to belong to churches where they could discover a network that could help grow their businesses. The small congregation did not have this resource. The Koreans also wanted more activities and opportunities for their small children. The ANBC did not have the resources. The Koreans wanted the church to relocate to their zip code area, leaving behind most of the other cultures who are not as wealthy. The congregation chose not to do this. The results produced a departure of the dominant culture, and members who did not have leadership ability. The pastor revitalizer has struggled to gain footing with such a small number.

Recommendation: There are plenty of churches for the Koreans in the River Region. There are not any churches for these minor nationalities who live in the community. The pastor revitalizer should replant his church, focusing on reaching the minor Asian groups of the region. He should address this new day as a church planter, replant the church and be the leader like an American missionary in a foreign land. Any language barrier can resolve itself with numerous communication devices available. The church could position themselves exactly where these minor groups live (in the north part of Korean town). They should look for the people of peace of each nationality and rebuild the church for the people the church initially sought to have, minus the Korean people group.

**Son Seven, SBC:** This congregation has a rich African American history that dates back to the turn of the twentieth century. They mostly made their mark during the civil rights era that brought about the bus boycott in Montgomery. Many from the congregation played a significant role in history during that season of time. The assembly has also experienced a rich legacy of being the college church for Alabama State University. At one time, they were actually on the school's campus. Still, the building of their basketball arena called the "Acadome" produced a sale and arrangement of moving to the campus's peripherals. The sale afforded the congregation a beautiful new campus, built in the 1990s. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the pastor of many years had a moral failure that devastated the church. It was rudderless for years, utilizing a local itinerant pastor to lead the church as an interim. In 2015, the church called a young pastor from Fort Lauderdale and assigned him to rebuild and revitalize the church. The undertaking has been a challenging task for the eager and godly pastor. Traditions and members who do not appreciate his more pragmatic style of preaching (as opposed to the "whooping and hollering" style typical in African American churches) have made it hard for the new pastor to be fully recognized and respected. However, the fifth year has now come, and change seems to be on the way.

**Recommendation:** Continually adopting one's community is the answer for this congregation to be revitalized. The "one-mile" area has got to know the heart of SBC and its pastor. They have to understand that the congregation is doing whatever it takes to help them and is creatively attempting to reach them with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Also, the pastor needs to become the college pastor. His sermon style is perfect for the academic community. Many are lost without Christ at neighboring Alabama State University, so he must see himself as a missionary, availing himself to this community of scholars until they are willing to be discipled

at SBC. Millennials also are drawn like a magnet to philanthropic activity. The young people could be a strong army toward helping their community by partnering with the church.

**Son Eight, GNFBC:** This congregation recently left their pastor and building, took the name, became incorporated, and resettled down the street from the former church. They called their worship leader to be their pastor. Son Eight, though rich in years, is inexperienced as a senior leader and lacks the pastoral skills that accompany a seasoned pulpiteer. Yet he has a deep heart for God and a great love for the people of GNFBC. He is going slow on purpose due to the congregation being hurt because of a previous conflict with their former pastor. Yet both new pastor and people are growing to appreciate one another. Respect from the community is building for their new shepherd. Simultaneously, the pastor revitalizer has availed himself of every learning opportunity, including being a *Son of Nehemiah*. He participated fervently in the learnings from video as well as personal coaching. He came to know, love, and appreciate his ministry peers and has sought them out as a sounding board for future projects. He is developing a heart that has produced a compelling vision, a devoted work ethic, a contagious passion, and a kingdom focus with community context. Though turned down by the church, the pastor revitalizer arranged for a modular center to become their new church home. The unit would be compliments of Southern Baptist's cooperative program. The congregation at this time felt they could not manage such an enormous gift and opportunity. However, they are open to future opportunities. The unemployment of their town is 95 percent, with most buildings boarded up. Yet the population remains stable at 450 citizens. They also have impact potential for another 2000 people within their five-mile radius.

**Recommendation:** Fort Deposit has never seen an African American church that intentionally seeks to serve its community. It is time for them to see people of color be soldiers

of the cross by ministering to the needs of this financially broken and spiritually hopeless city. The pastor revitalizer should continue to work with associational leadership to make GNFBC the flagship church in Fort Deposit. With the chairman of deacons' wife being the mayor, this presents the congregation with an excellent opportunity to effect change and bring redemption to the city. Let the church lead out in rebuilding the physically, emotionally, spiritual and economically destitute walls of the town.

**Son Nine, SJBC:** This congregation is probably at the heart of Montgomery's most significant and geographical focal point. Located in Midtown at the corner of its two main arteries, the area is full of gentrification and rising real estate. Thousands of people pass by this church every day, coming and going about their day's activities. Though it has a rich history, most city citizens know the church because of its significant location. One cannot miss this church building. Tradition and church conflict has produced a gradual decline. They reached out and secured one of their staff members to replace a pastor who left under distress. He has become an anointed leader for the congregation. They have struggled with former pastors who preached well but did not have good business sense. This pastor is a strong leader with the state government in finance through the Department of Transportation. He is also an adjunct professor of accounting at Judson College, a regional Alabama Baptist higher learning institution. SON Nine leads like a pastor who has been in the pulpit for years. In the COVID season, his creativity and the church's response has produced a great model and public relations for the church. They were one of the first churches to do "drive-in." They also created a canopy for the pulpit so that everyone could see the praise team and the pastor. The church is in a predominantly Anglo and wealthy community. The strategy produced many families, starving for good preaching and gospel singing, to come out adjacent to their property and sit down with their families and dogs

during the “shelter and place” season. The strategy never failed, and the people still come each Sunday. Now they are facing stage two of revitalization.

Recommendation: The pastor needs to continue to win the hearts of the people by bringing confidence that he is a strong business leader and a good pastor who will never hurt them. As the trust develops, continue to minister to the community. Also, continue to provide some sort of broadcast to those outside the facility on Sundays, even though the congregation may be coming back inside. Adopt all the businesses in the church’s “one mile,” sending people to collect their prayer requests and presenting them to the throne of grace each week at the mid-week service. Make the church known to the community with many forms of public relations. One premium idea is to place a marquis board on such a strategic corner. Have fun but easy statements for people to take to work with them daily. See it as a message board to the community. They will soon be stopping by to capture the pastor and church's contagious passion for their slice of the city.

Son Ten, SCBC: This congregation is the oldest of all ten churches. Birthed in 1871, they just celebrated their 149<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It is rural, with nothing but hunting land and pasture for at least five miles on all sides. When one gets to the entrance, they have to travel about one mile to the location deep in the woods. Yet the beautiful “church in the wildwood” building, the serenity of nature, the legacy of history, and the love of God’s people make for a perfect opportunity for people searching for the peace of Christ. The pastor revitalizer is a skilled practitioner, a former minister of education of a large Florida church, and a retired Director of Missions. He has written many books on church revitalization and works for the association as their Director of Church Wellness. The church has struggled in recent years with a conflict that split the congregation. It also left them with a theological divide that has been manageable but

continues to be an issue that has not entirely resolved. However, on the Lord's day, the small congregation of a "quarter church" (preaching two times a month, Sunday school every Sunday) gathers at the spiritual river and hosts services filled with singing, teaching, testimonies, flag pledging, and fiery preaching. They genuinely desire to reach out to their community and grow their church, despite being in such a rural area.

Recommendation: The pastor revitalizer is ideal for the SCBC. His "idea well" is full, and he knows how to implement a strategy. One great idea that he is expounding on is building a sign at the base of their church lot, announcing services, and other matters. It would also be a good idea to create a webpage and Facebook the services, promoting the church as the "church in the wildwood" and making sure the website has all the current information and directions. Continue to have singings and other opportunities for people to see such a lovely and immaculate church. One would be surprised about how many city people would come the few miles out of town for such a hallowed and encouraging experience.

The researcher has already invested much in these men who make up the *Sons of Nehemiah*. As their Director of Missions, he loves them and seeks the very best for their ministry and family. It is heartbreaking to a pastor revitalizer when he has tried so hard and yet has not seen church revitalization in Jesus' name.

The researcher has already invested much in the congregations of the Montgomery Baptist Association. He loves them, prays with them, hopes with them, and seeks a better day for the pastor revitalizer and his congregation. It is heartbreaking when the congregation's pastor revitalizer's expectation does not meet their mental, emotional, and sometimes spiritual perspective. The lack of communication becomes a determining factor of decline. The broken

relationship between people of God eventually leads to an exit plan for the pastor revitalizer and his family.

The results of this study is about excellence and expectations. It allows the pastor revitalizer to raise his awareness, skill set, and exposure to biblical success in such a way that changes him. His habits change, his leadership style changes, his faith and hope in God change, and his love and belief in the church move positively. The study gives equally an opportunity for the congregation to communicate and fall in love with their pastor again. It gives them hope and a chance to see their dreams of church revitalization come to reality. The results may have some scientific value, but to this researcher and hopefully, to those affected by the study, it will be a spiritual quest where once again, all participating watch the “dry bones become flesh.”



## Conclusion

### General Reflection of the Study's Purpose and Overview

Every pastor revitalizer should have four core competencies in his life habits if he is to discover success in church revitalization: 1) a compelling vision, 2) a devoted work ethic, 3) a contagious passion, and 4) a kingdom focus with a community context. The study expounded upon these four competencies. It began by stating the problem. The project continued by identifying the purpose. Finally, the study reflected a thesis development around these four leadership practices.

First, there was the *problem*: Many pastors who serve Montgomery congregations that require church revitalization are not known or expected to be high capacity leaders or trained revitalizers. Second, there was the *purpose*: Raise the level of leadership capacity from nominal to exceptional through the training and coaching of ten pastor revitalizers in Montgomery congregations. Third, there was the *thesis*: If ten pastor revitalizers with nominal leadership capacity subject themselves to high-level leadership training, then a higher level of leadership capacity in the ten pastor revitalizers should be the anticipated result.

The conclusion was that the *Sons of Nehemiah* (named to represent the pastor revitalizers of ten churches in Montgomery, Alabama), were able to advance their leadership capacity due to personal coaching and national exposure. The peer-to-peer gatherings also led them to become closer to their fellow pastors. To this day, they are proud to carry the name, *Sons of Nehemiah*. They are the first class of many from the Montgomery Baptist Association's new school of church revitalization.

## How Does the Research Project Results Compare to the Information Gleaned From Previous Studies or the Published Work Analyzed in the Literature Review?

The research done on the churches and the pastor revitalizers favored all the literature review themes comparatively. Theme One spoke the truth about dying and declining churches. In general, the authors acknowledge the reality of several churches closing every year. In doing the churches' action research in the study, all shared a concern that if things do not change, they would also be a casualty to closure.

Theme Two spoke about the revitalized church and God's glory. In general, the authors acknowledged that the gospel gives life and that when proclaimed, the church will also see an experience that brings glory to the Lord. They realized that renewal only occurs when God restores a once healthy church. The congregations in the study yearn for the day when life from the Spirit of God would restore their once healthy church. The words "revival," "renewal," and "revitalization" reflect what they seek in this season of awakening.

Theme Three affirmed metrics, goals, and success in church revitalization. In general, the authors acknowledged the importance of metrics. Most of the authors used a "broad brush" to point out how goals produced success. There was a significant gap in Christian literature regarding utilizing S.M.A.R.T. goals as a metric (Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely). Though there was an acknowledgment of the authors for strategic planning, most did not explain how to accomplish such or what the outcome would be. In the thesis, the researcher acknowledged that the core competency of having a devoted work ethic is directly related to setting goals that would be strategic, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. The researcher acknowledged that most churches and leaders suffered because of the lack of goals and illustrated such with the *Sons of Nehemiah*, none of which had any long-term written plans or

annual goals. The lack of goals had also contributed to them not having a compelling vision, a kingdom focus, and a contagious passion. If not corrected, the church and the pastor revitalizer's outcome would ultimately end in decline as well as closure.

Theme Four spoke of the missiological imperatives in church revitalization. Most of the authors' research shared a similar list of imperatives. Prayer was at the top of the list. The thesis project noted how prayer is fundamental in preparing a church for a new life in Christ. They also spoke of pragmatic things such as loving the existing church family and raising young men as leaders. The *Sons of Nehemiah* and their churches have all discovered the value of these imperatives. They are committed prayer warriors, and there is a deep commitment to young men and their discipleship.

Theme Five spoke of the qualities of a church revitalizer. All of the authors ranked vision as the highest quality to find success. They also acknowledged a high tolerance for pain and disappointment. The researcher sees the four competencies as equals. The compelling vision would mean nothing if there was not a kingdom focus. The researcher would submit that one would be challenged to implement contagious passion if the pastor revitalizer does not have a mind to work. He concludes that all core competencies, not just one or a few, are needed if success equals church revitalization.

The researcher spoke to the literature gap as it relates to goals and metrics. He also discussed the hindrance of the three present historical pandemics affecting the American church and her organic revitalization process as a literature gap. The medical issues surrounding COVID-19 has produced a definite economic collapse in the infrastructure of the church. As the Director of Missions for the Montgomery Baptist Association, the researcher has witnessed firsthand how the medical pandemic has played a cultural and political divide, causing many

churches to hasten in their closure. The present church struggles regarding the safety of coming inside the church versus the courage to push forward toward Great Commission causes has resulted in many members' numerous departures. Several have searched for churches that identify more closely with their views on “mask-wearing” or “social distancing.” The long season of being away from church has also resulted in most churches seeing only a seventy to eighty percent return of their average membership. Many congregations have accepted these “AWOL” families are gone for good. Fear, along with reality, has hastened the closure of several of the MBA churches. Before COVID-19, each of these now closed congregations felt they had a longer runway of development and return to new life. “The Effect of COVID on the Church” book is not yet written. The study acknowledges how the year 2020 has historically played a significant role in church revitalization. Some- for better. Some- for worse.

#### What Did the Researcher Learn Implementing the Project?

The researcher learned much about the Montgomery area, culture, churches, and pastors during the study. He learned how an area defines the culture. For example, Montgomery is the Capitol of Alabama. It is also home to the Air War College of the U.S. Air Force. It also is host to the North American Hyundai plant. Montgomery has a long history that relates to division. It played a significant role in post-revolutionary days and the coming of 1812 with their participation in the departure of Creek Native Americans from the land to usher in the white settlement. The city was for a season the financial center of the south. Tragically, it was the city of finance because they were the “tip of the spear” in domestic human trafficking, with the sale of slaves every day to customers all through the south. It was the confederacy home, where Jeff Davis took his oath of office and where the telegrapher sent word to fire on Fort Sumter. Montgomery played a major role in developing Jim Crow laws and redefined slavery through

segregation and using black prisoners to work their farms. Though the social landscape changed in the sixties with the passage of the Civil Rights law, Montgomery's minds and hearts had pride and a “my rights” attitude. That spirit has dramatically affected the River Region church culture and their resistance to change.

The government town has affected the work ethic of Montgomery residents. While most other towns balance entrepreneurship and business establishments, other cities understand that you will not survive if you don't work hard. Montgomery's top three employers are federal, state, and county government. Tenure, mediocrity, and a spirit of having a job regardless of economics or work performance have shaped the local church's attitude. The local culture has dictated the perception that the church will always be there, so there is no need to be alarmed or to take action to make matters better.

The Montgomery culture has affected the passion and vision of the leaders in the church. The pastor comes with a strong vision and deep desire to lead the church to victory, only to be worn down with what the researcher calls an “EEYORE” spirit (after the character in *Winnie the Pooh*). “We tried that, and it did not work.” “What will others say?” “It will cost too much.” These are some of the quotes learned from the churches. The daring spirit and sense of urgency are erased quickly from the pastor revitalizer as he climbs a mountain too tall and too lonely to come over the crescent. Mediocrity becomes the norm, and one rarely sees revitalization in the church.

The comfort zone of the church building, often produced by prejudice and fear, keeps a church from seeing the community through the eyes and heart of Jesus. Most non-members of the community were unaware that a church existed. And if they did, they could not identify any particular ministry carried out in their community by the congregation. Most of the churches in

the study would create an activity for their community but not engage the people they met regularly. Failure to understand how to exegete their neighborhood with a kingdom focus often led to a return to mediocrity. It snuffed the life out of being a community church rather than a church in the community.

The researcher learned that love and some measure of unity existed in all the churches. He further discovered that this was because the church family knew only each other. There were not any systematic attempts to evangelize the lost and disciple the saved. Comfort and familiarity were more important to the group at large than the Great Commission. Though they made attempts to know their neighbors, they were easily swayed with excuses to stay inside the walls, including using the COVID crisis. Isolation was the preferred method. Happiness equaled the church gathered, not the church scattered. The pastor revitalizer eventually succumbed to the same attitude.

The researcher learned that though the people seem to understand that their decline had affected their way of life, namely their budget, they were mostly content with things as they were, just so the church does not close on their watch. They carefully watch the savings account, govern the budget, and limit the staff and ministry dollar. The frugal objective allows the church at large to extend its longevity, saving closure for another day and another group. Most likely, the present pastor revitalizer will not be there at the time of closing.

The researcher learned that all ten pastor revitalizers and their churches eagerly sought to assist the study. For the most part, the pastor revitalizers gave one hundred percent of their effort to participate intimately in the study. They sincerely learned and have improved their performance with knowledge and inspiration. The churches are motivated quickly toward the cause of change. But they do not reflect the stamina nor fortitude to stay the course.

The researcher has learned that change comes mainly through fervent prayer and fasting. The churches do not have a cultural problem. Like every human, they struggle with a heart problem. They tend to tilt toward the kingdom of self rather than the kingdom of God. The only thing that can change this habit is for the remnant to faithfully fast and pray. The Holy Spirit can rain down today in the city of Montgomery if He chooses. But the invitation would come from those who lead from their knees. Prayerfully, the ten *Sons of Nehemiah* leaders and their churches are willing to seek the Lord with all their heart, no matter what. Are they ready to walk in the Lord's steps, no matter what? Are they prepared to do "whatever it takes," no matter what? Like Ezekiel said, "Can these dry bones live? Only the Lord knows" (Ezekiel 37:3).

#### How Might the Results Apply in Other Settings?

The learnings assimilated from the thesis project's action research apply to any church setting related primarily to human nature. The same struggles revealed from the study could be easily seen in most of America's urban churches. Even though most of the learnings came in the context of a government town, Montgomery is not the only city where over half of its population employs civic citizens.

As one who traveled the continent as a North American Mission Board leader, the researcher identifies these characteristics in most churches. The retired NAMB leader has spoken and consulted in all fifty states of the union and Canada. The researcher's observation is that factors like mediocrity, apathy, self-centeredness, isolationism, and indifference to outsiders are not native to the south. It is a state of "sin" in the church. One will not see the revival the Lord wants to bring until the church submits to 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If my people, who are called by name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land." The church divided can become

the church united as well as the church revitalized by admitting their sinful behavior and begging God to intervene.

Regardless of his context, the leader will have to acquire the four core competencies mentioned in the study. The pastor revitalizer must have a compelling vision, a devoted work ethic, a contagious passion, and a kingdom focus with a community context. These competencies must have the centerpiece of prayer if church revitalization is ever to be seen in the church he pastors.

#### Did Anything Emerge During the Study That Merits Future Research?

Suppose there is one common denominator from the five themes of all the books in the literature review relating to church revitalization success. In that case, it is the consistent use of goals. In short, it appears that those who use goals will pragmatically succeed in revitalizing their church. Those who do not use goals as a practical tool will most likely not succeed in restoring their church. Truthfully, prayer has a role. Compelling vision and contagious passion play an essential part in setting a course toward success. Knowing one's backyard gives a full awareness of the spiritual and cultural landscape, developing the church's kingdom focus. But it appears the pastor revitalizer whose devoted work ethic includes S.M.A.R.T. goals arrives at their objective every time. Goals keep a person and persons in the right lane with a direct focus and a clear plan. Perhaps that is the reason why leaning toward simple, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely goals appears to equal success. It would make another good thesis project to bring quantitative and qualitative data to this presupposition.

Another worthy research concept is the massive demographic change in the country as it relates to the disparity between standard evangelical tenants and white evangelical values. The researcher uncovered how white evangelicals need to have more sensitivity to the demographic



of where they are typically attempting to replant a church and the community from where their revitalizing congregation exists. Most of these communities are a minority. In the urban context, the minorities have become the majority. From their perspective, including minority evangelicals, the white evangelical is typically known as a republican, anti-abortionist, theologically conservative, and an individualistic person.<sup>129</sup> Most of the churches in decline, at least in Montgomery, Alabama, fit the above profile. Their community is typically democrat, sees sanctity of life with a social justice view, is theologically conservative, and is considered communal and tribal rather than an individual thinker. If the church is to evangelize and disciple their community effectively, they must have a better exegetical and cultural understanding of their neighborhood. Open and honest conversations are paramount to success. Any discipleship done in the urban area must address race and racism. It would make another good thesis project to bring quantitative and qualitative data to this presupposition.

The year 2020 has dramatically changed the landscape of church revitalization. It has happened because the church gathered, and the church scattered had to become the church sheltered most of the year. Presently, one can only guess how COVID-19 has affected the church. Most anecdotal comments suggest a twenty percent loss of membership followed by a second wave of departure caused by short tempers, hostile takeovers, and other more human frailties that often come in times of disaster and crisis. Some suggest that there will be twice as many churches closing as is expected every year and that there will be a twenty percent dropout of pastors leaving the ministry. While most of these predictions are presently unsubstantial, future research and historical examination will reveal the truth to these concerns. But on a

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<sup>129</sup> Dhati Lewis, "Race and the Evangelical Church," *Where Life Exists*, (2020): You Tube, accessed November 11, 2020, Dr. Lewis is Vice President of Church Planting, North American Mission Board, <https://www.youtube.com/c/WhereLifeExists>.

positive note, the idea of such a decline brings about the greatest need to train pastor revitalizers for church revitalization. If correct, the number of replanting opportunities will be before associations and other church leadership much more rapidly than was expected. That will call for a more exact response, quicker action, and determined goals that affect kingdom change. It would make another good thesis project to bring quantitative and qualitative data to this presupposition, especially in late 2021 or 2022.

### The Study in Light of the Theological and Theoretical Foundations

The book of Nehemiah reflects the perfect principles for church revitalization and the development of pastor revitalizers. The book presents prayer as the center and the first principle of any new endeavor. The four core competencies of a pastor revitalizer define Nehemiah's vision to the people. It is also apparent in his devoted work ethic, contagious passion that led to the wall's completion, and Nehemiah's kingdom focus by revealing how well he knew his community and his opposition. The research has the Old Testament builder in mind. Nehemiah would have made the perfect pastor revitalizer had he lived in America during the twenty-first century.

The two theories mentioned in the theoretical foundation portion of chapter two reveal the research and action plan theory. The research on the literature review reflects a shortage of writing on the leadership of the pastor revitalizer. He presented the need for more material on pastor revitalizers' growth, particularly relating to a compelling vision, devoted work ethic, contagious passion, and kingdom focus in a community context.

The action research confirmed theory two that if the pastor revitalizer is exposed to personal coaching and national leaders, his leadership capacity will rise to a higher level. The researcher proved this to be true. The research also revealed some of the realities of the twenty-

first-century church in Montgomery, Alabama, making it extremely challenging to bring about significant change that would lead to new life among the people of God. He also confirmed the theory that the pastor revitalizer has to fight the temptation not to succumb to the churches' mediocrity. Instead, he must pour new vision into his parishioners' hearts, work with goals, lead with passion like a magnet, and thoroughly understand community, culture, opportunities, and challenges.

#### Final Recommendations for the Sons of Nehemiah and Their Churches

As in every case, the most significant transformation that must occur in a leader's life is the understanding that he alone owns the responsibility for growing his leadership skills and his relationship with Jesus Christ.<sup>130</sup> There is hope that one day the word "church" in a person's mind would refer to Christians in the workplace and community, not a building.<sup>131</sup> The forgiven assembly must push forward with every bit of their being, as the world needs the word more than ever before and a church home where they can grow as a Christ-follower.

The *Sons of Nehemiah* are good, holy men of God. They have prepared well, believe in their calling, and have sacrificially given themselves to often thankless and critical church members. To these men, remember the words given by Dr. Gary Moritz upon graduation as he quoted the words of Jesus, "I Will Build My Church" (adapted from Matthew 16:18). Follow the apostle Paul's admonition to "not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9). Hold on to the future by heeding the words of Nehemiah, saying to the opposers when they come with their "cease and desist" order, "I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and

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<sup>130</sup> Dan Greer, *Church Scattered* "Christianity for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Daphne, AL: Church Scattered, 2020), 129.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 127.

go down to you?” (Nehemiah 6:3). Let the Holy Spirit thrill the *Sons of Nehemiah* with His presence, fill them with His love, and skill these brothers with His warfare. God willing, as a courageous and more assertive leader, each of the *Sons of Nehemiah* will be able to witness the breath of God blow as the dry bones of their church come to life (adapted from Ezekiel 37:1-6).

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## **Section One: Qualitative Data:**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Recruitment Letter to “Sons of Nehemiah” Participants**

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student of the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of my study is to determine that if pastor revitalizers are personally coached and receive national exposure to church revitalization professionals, then their higher capacity of leadership will enable the revitalizing church to gain positive momentum toward a new day. I am writing to invite you to join my study as a **“Sons of Nehemiah” participant**.

The participant will be asked to:

1. Complete a recorded interview between participant and researcher (30 minutes).
2. Prepare two assessment tools before the orientation meeting. The first is the DISC profile, and the other is a pre-assessment by NAMB for church replanters (90 minutes).
3. Participate in an orientation meeting with peer-to-peer learning and presentation of assessment documents (90 minutes with dinner provided).
4. Participate in 6 weekly sessions of personal coaching via telephone or Zoom between participant and researcher (30 minute each session).
5. Participate in 6 weekly sessions of educational coaching and peer-to-peer learning (90 minutes each meeting with dinner provided)
6. Participate in 6 weekly conferences with the virtual *Revitalize Conference* with national leaders, provided for at-home study (90 minutes of three conference sessions per week).
7. Complete recorded exit interview between participant and researcher (30 minutes).
8. Participate in an “eagle” award ceremony with your church at the annual meeting of the Montgomery Baptist Association on November 2, 2020.

Your name and other identifying information will be collected as part of your participation, but this information will remain confidential. To participate, please inform me either by replying to this email or contacting me at (678) 622-1056.

A consent document is attached to this email. If you choose to participate, please sign and either return via scan/email or present the material at the time of the first interview (to be determined). The consent document contains additional information about my research.

Your participation will also enable you to have a complete summary of the study, which may assist you and your congregation in church revitalization. Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in the study.

**Neal Hughes**

**Director of Missions**

Montgomery Baptist Association of Churches

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## Appendix B

### Consent To Participate in Research (Sons of Nehemiah Participants)

#### Consent

**Title of the Project:** *Sons of Nehemiah: Raising the Level of Leadership in Ten Pastor Revitalizers of the Montgomery Baptist Association*

**Principal Investigator:** Donald Neal Hughes, Doctor of Ministry Department / Rawlings School of Divinity / Liberty University

**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. Gary J. Moritz, Mentor, Doctor of Ministry Department / Rawlings School of Divinity / Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a pastor revitalizer of a Montgomery Baptist Church, known for this project as a member of the *Sons of Nehemiah*. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to determine that if pastor revitalizers are personally coached and receive national exposure to church revitalization professionals, then their capacity of leadership will raise to a higher level, thus enabling the revitalizing church to gain positive momentum toward a new day. The study is being done to assist not only the pastor revitalizer and his congregation, but also to be a pilot program that will lead toward encouraging, equipping, and empowering future pastor revitalizers and congregations of the Montgomery Baptist Association.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an initial interview with the researcher. This will be private, will be recorded, and will not exceed 30 minutes in time.
2. Participate in a 6-week invention that consists of an orientation meeting last 90 minutes with dinner served, completing the DISC profile/NAMB Pre-assessment (90 minutes), 6 weekly personal coaching sessions with this searcher lasting 30 minutes each week via phone or Zoom, 6 weekly education meetings lasting 90 minutes with dinner served each meeting, and be part of 6 weekly virtual revitalize conferences with national leaders

lasting 90 minutes each week (at home study). Observational field notes will be taken by the researcher throughout the intervention process.

3. Participate in an exit interview with the researcher. This will be private, will be recorded, and will not exceed 30 minutes in time.

#### **How could you or others benefit from this study?**

There are four direct benefits you and your congregation should expect to receive from this study:

1. You will have a better knowledge and training in church revitalization.
2. You will enjoy the shared involvement of your congregation and community as you search for a new day and renewal for your church and neighborhood.
3. You and your congregation will be recognized and receive an “eagle” award at the annual meeting of the Montgomery Baptist Association on November 4, 2020, as a statement of your accomplishment and the establishment of the *Sons of Nehemiah* training school.
4. You and your congregation will receive a copy of the thesis project and all quantitative data related to your congregation.

#### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

#### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a HIPPA certified cloud storage. It may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

### **Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?**

The researcher serves as the Director of Missions of the Montgomery Baptist Association. There is not an apparent conflict of interest, as the Director of Missions is charged to serve and assist the churches and their pastors with church revitalization. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the Montgomery Baptist Association, including the Director of Missions. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Neal Hughes. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at (678) 622-1056 / [nhughes@mgmbaptists.org](mailto:nhughes@mgmbaptists.org). You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Gary J. Moritz, at [gjmoritz@liberty.edu](mailto:gjmoritz@liberty.edu).

### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu)

## Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

---

Printed Subject Name

---

Signature & Date

## Appendix C

### Recruitment Letter to Chairman of Deacons

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student of the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of my study is to determine that if pastor revitalizers are personally coached and receive national exposure to church revitalization professionals, then their higher capacity of leadership will enable the revitalizing church to gain positive momentum toward a new day. The thesis project is called the “Sons of Nehemiah” study. I am writing to invite you to join my study as a **chairman of deacons participant**.

The chairman of deacon participant will be asked to:

1. Complete a recorded interview between the researcher and the participant (30 minutes).
2. Participate in a recorded focus group interview with the deacon body of your church (45 minutes).
3. Complete a second recorded interview after 6 weeks (30 minutes).
4. You will be invited to participate in an “eagle” award ceremony honoring the “Sons of Nehemiah” and their respective churches at the annual meeting of the Montgomery Baptist Association on November 2, 2020.

Your name and other identifying information will be collected as part of your participation, but this information will remain confidential.

To participate, please inform me either by replying to this email or contacting me at (678) 622-1056.

A consent document is attached to this email. If you choose to participate, please sign and either return via scan/email or present the material at the time of the first interview (to be determined). The consent document contains additional information about my research.

Your participation will also enable you to have a complete summary of the study, which may assist you and your congregation in church revitalization. Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in the study.

Sincerely,

**Neal Hughes**

**Director of Missions**

Montgomery Baptist Association of Churches

20 Interstate Park Drive

Montgomery, Alabama 36109

[nhughes@mgmbaptists.org](mailto:nhughes@mgmbaptists.org) / @nealhughes

O (334) 271-6227 / C (678) 622-1056

## Appendix D

### Consent To Participate in Research (Chairman of Deacons)

#### Consent

**Title of the Project:** *Sons of Nehemiah: Raising the Level of Leadership in Ten Pastor Revitalizers of the Montgomery Baptist Association*

**Principal Investigator:** Donald Neal Hughes, Doctor of Ministry Department / Rawlings School of Divinity / Liberty University

**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. Gary J. Moritz, Mentor, Doctor of Ministry Department / Rawlings School of Divinity / Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be the chairman of deacons of a pastor revitalizer of a Montgomery Baptist Church. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to determine that if pastor revitalizers are personally coached and receive national exposure to church revitalization professionals, then their capacity of leadership will raise to a higher level, thus enabling the revitalizing church to gain positive momentum toward a new day. The study is being done to assist not only the pastor revitalizer and his congregation, but also to be a pilot program that will lead toward encouraging, equipping, and empowering future pastor revitalizers and congregations of the Montgomery Baptist Association.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an initial interview with the researcher. This will be private, will be recorded, and will not exceed 30 minutes in time.
2. Participate in a focus group interview with the deacon body in a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of your congregation. This focus group will be recorded, and will not exceed 45 minutes in time.



3. Participate in an exit interview, 6 weeks later, with the researcher. This will be private, will be recorded, and will not exceed 30 minutes in time.

### **How could you or others benefit from this study?**

There are four indirect benefits you and your congregation should expect to receive from this study:

1. You will have a better knowledge and training in church revitalization.
2. You will enjoy the shared involvement of your congregation and community as you search for a new day and renewal for your church and neighborhood.
3. You and your congregation will be recognized and receive an “eagle” award at the annual meeting of the Montgomery Baptist Association on November 4, 2020, as a statement of your accomplishment and the establishment of the *Sons of Nehemiah* training school.
4. You and your congregation will receive a copy of the thesis project and all quantitative data related to your congregation.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a HIPPA certified cloud storage. It may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

### **Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?**

The researcher serves as the Director of Missions of the Montgomery Baptist Association. There is not an apparent conflict of interest, as the Director of Missions is charged to serve and assist the churches and their pastors with church revitalization. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the Montgomery Baptist Association, including the Director of Missions. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Neal Hughes. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at (678) 622-1056 / [nhughes@mgmbaptists.org](mailto:nhughes@mgmbaptists.org). You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Gary J. Moritz, at [gjmoritz@liberty.edu](mailto:gjmoritz@liberty.edu).

### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu)

## Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

---

Printed Subject Name

---

Signature & Date

## Appendix E

### Recruitment Letter to Legacy Church Member Participants

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student of the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of my study is to determine that if pastor revitalizers are personally coached and receive national exposure to church revitalization professionals, then their higher capacity of leadership will enable the revitalizing church to gain positive momentum toward a new day. The thesis project is called the “Sons of Nehemiah” study. I am writing to invite you to join my study as a **legacy church member participant and/or a church deacon participant**.

The participant will be asked to:

1. **Legacy Church Members:** Be a part of a focus group between the researcher and other legacy member participants. The focus group will be recorded and will last approximately 45 minutes.
2. **Deacons:** Be a part of a focus group interview between the researcher and other deacon participants. The focus group will be recorded and will last approximately 45 minutes.

**\*If you are both a deacon and a legacy church member, you will be asked to participate in both focus groups.**

All participants will be invited to participate in an “eagle” award ceremony honoring the “Sons of Nehemiah” and their respective churches at the annual meeting of the Montgomery Baptist Association on November 2, 2020.

Your name and other identifying information will be collected as part of your participation, but this information will remain confidential. To participate, please inform me either by replying to this email or contacting me at (678) 622-1056.

A consent document is attached to this email. If you choose to participate, please sign and either return via scan/email or present the material at the time of the first interview (to be determined). The consent document contains additional information about my research.

Your participation will also enable you to have a complete summary of the study, which may assist you and your congregation in church revitalization. Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in the study.

Neal Hughes  
Director of Missions  
Montgomery Baptist Association of Churches

## Appendix F

### Consent To Participate in Research (Legacy Church Member/Deacon Participants)

#### Consent

**Title of the Project:** *Sons of Nehemiah: Raising the Level of Leadership in Ten Pastor Revitalizers of the Montgomery Baptist Association*

**Principal Investigator:** Donald Neal Hughes, Doctor of Ministry Department / Rawlings School of Divinity / Liberty University

**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. Gary J. Moritz, Mentor, Doctor of Ministry Department / Rawlings School of Divinity / Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a legacy church member or a church deacon of a pastor revitalizer of a Montgomery Baptist Church. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to determine that if pastor revitalizers are personally coached and receive national exposure to church revitalization professionals, then their capacity of leadership will raise to a higher level, thus enabling the revitalizing church to gain positive momentum toward a new day. The study is being done to assist not only the pastor revitalizer and his congregation, but also to be a pilot program that will lead toward encouraging, equipping, and empowering future pastor revitalizers and congregations of the Montgomery Baptist Association.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

1. **Legacy Church Members.** Participate in a focus group interview with other legacy members participants. This focus group will be recorded, and will not exceed 45 minutes in time.
2. **Deacons.** Participate in a focus group interview with other deacon participants. This focus group will be recorded and will not exceed 45 minutes in time.

**\*If you are both a deacon and a legacy church member, you will be asked to participate in both focus groups.**

#### **How could you or others benefit from this study?**

There are four indirect benefits you and your congregation should expect to receive from this study:

1. You will have a better knowledge and training in church revitalization.
2. You will enjoy the shared involvement of your congregation and community as you search for a new day and renewal for your church and neighborhood.
3. Your congregation will be recognized and receive an “eagle” award at the annual meeting of the Montgomery Baptist Association on November 4, 2020, as a statement of your accomplishment and the establishment of the *Sons of Nehemiah* training school.
4. Your congregation will receive a copy of the thesis project and all quantitative data related to your congregation.

#### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

#### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.
- Focus group interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a HIPPA certified cloud storage. It may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

### **Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?**

The researcher serves as the Director of Missions of the Montgomery Baptist Association. There is not an apparent conflict of interest, as the Director of Missions is charged to serve and assist the churches and their pastors with church revitalization. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the Montgomery Baptist Association, including the Director of Missions. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Neal Hughes. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at (678) 622-1056 / [nhughes@mgmbaptists.org](mailto:nhughes@mgmbaptists.org). You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Gary J. Moritz, at [gjmoritz@liberty.edu](mailto:gjmoritz@liberty.edu).

### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu)

## Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

---

Printed Subject Name

---

Signature & Date



## Appendix G

### Recruitment Letter to Community Participants (Non-Church Members)

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student of the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of my study is to determine that if pastor revitalizers are personally coached and receive national exposure to church revitalization professionals, then their higher capacity of leadership will enable the revitalizing church to gain positive momentum toward a new day. The thesis project is called the “Sons of Nehemiah” study. I am writing to invite you to join my study as a **community participant (who is not a member of the church participating in the research)**.

The participant will be asked to:

1. Complete a recorded interview with the researcher (30 minutes).

Your name and other identifying information will be collected as part of your participation, but this information will remain confidential. All interviews will be confidential.

To participate, please inform me either by replying to this email or contacting me at (678) 622-1056.

A consent document is attached to this email. If you choose to participate, please sign and either return via scan/email or present the material at the time of the interview (to be determined). The consent document contains additional information about my research.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in the study.

Sincerely,

**Neal Hughes**

**Director of Missions**

Montgomery Baptist Association of Churches

20 Interstate Park Drive

Montgomery, Alabama 36109

[nhughes@mgmbaptists.org](mailto:nhughes@mgmbaptists.org) / @nealhughes

O (334) 271-6227 / C (678) 622-1056

## Appendix H

### Consent To Participate in Research (Community/Non-Church Member Participants)

#### Consent

**Title of the Project:** *Sons of Nehemiah: Raising the Level of Leadership in Ten Pastor Revitalizers of the Montgomery Baptist Association*

**Principal Investigator:** Donald Neal Hughes, Doctor of Ministry Department / Rawlings School of Divinity / Liberty University

**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. Gary J. Moritz, Mentor, Doctor of Ministry Department / Rawlings School of Divinity / Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a member of the community (i.e. resident, business, church, etc.) but not a church member of a pastor revitalizer of a Montgomery Baptist Church. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to determine that if pastor revitalizers are personally coached and receive national exposure to church revitalization professionals, then their capacity of leadership will raise to a higher level, thus enabling the revitalizing church to gain positive momentum toward a new day. The study is being done to assist not only the pastor revitalizer and his congregation, but also to be a pilot program that will lead toward encouraging, equipping, and empowering future pastor revitalizers and congregations of the Montgomery Baptist Association.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in an interview with the researcher. This will be private, will be recorded, and will not exceed 30 minutes in time.

#### How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a HIPPA certified cloud storage. It may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the Montgomery Baptist Association, including the Director of Missions. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Neal Hughes. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at (678) 622-1056 / [nhughes@mgmbaptists.org](mailto:nhughes@mgmbaptists.org). You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Gary J. Moritz, at [gjmoritz@liberty.edu](mailto:gjmoritz@liberty.edu).

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu)

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Subject Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature & Date

## **Appendix I**

### **Pseudonyms for the Sons of Nehemiah and Their Churches: Ten Pastor Revitalizers in the Study**

1. **Son One**, RBC: Suburban Church of One Hundred in Average Attendance
2. **Son Two**, PRBC: Rural/Suburban Church of Fifteen in Average Attendance
3. **Son Three**, COPR: Suburban Church of Thirty in Average Attendance
4. **Son Four**, CHBC: Urban Church of One Hundred in Average Attendance
5. **Son Five**, LBC: Rural Church of Twenty in Average Attendance
6. **Son Six**, ANBC, Suburban Church of Fifteen in Average Attendance
7. **Son Seven**, SBC, Urban Church of Two Hundred Fifty in Average Attendance
8. **Son Eight**, GNFBBC, Rural Church of Fifty in Average Attendance
9. **Son Nine**, SJBC, Suburban Church of One Hundred Thirty in Average Attendance
10. **Son Ten**, SCBC, Rural Church of Ten in Average Attendance

## Appendix J

### Triangulation Team

The researcher will recruit the following to assist him as analysts for the *Sons of Nehemiah* study:

1. Researcher: Rev. Neal Hughes, Director of Missions, Montgomery Baptist Association, 20 Interstate Park Drive, Montgomery, Alabama 36109, [nhughes@mgbaptists.org](mailto:nhughes@mgbaptists.org)
2. Insider: Dr. Ken Allen, Church Health Strategist, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, 1404 Fairview Avenue, Prattville, AL 36066, [kallen@alsbom.org](mailto:kallen@alsbom.org)
4. Outsider: Dr. Bob Burton, Midwest Regional Equipper, Send Network, The North American Mission Board, 4200 Northpoint Parkway, Alpharetta, Georgia, 30022, [bburton@namb.net](mailto:bburton@namb.net)

## Appendix K

### Personal Interview Questions for the Sons of Nehemiah

Interview each of the ten pastor revitalizers to gather data of their personal and professional history as well as their expectations of the study. The researcher will ask the following qualitative action questions:

1. What is your personal background (i.e., born and raised, salvation and calling to ministry testimony, family growing up, marriage, family now, hobbies, interests)?
2. What is your educational background (i.e., undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate, emphases of studies while in school, career CEU's, any study on church revitalization)?
3. What has been your career history as a pastor (start from the beginning)?
4. What has been your best time as a pastor? Your worst time as a pastor?
5. What are some reasons why you chose to come to your present church, and how do you anticipate changing it for the better?
6. Does your family support your dreams and ambitions (if not, why)?
7. Do you consider yourself healthy in a symphonic way: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, relational? Defend your answer.
8. On a scale of 1-10, where do you see yourself regarding having a compelling vision, devoted work ethic, contagious passion, and kingdom focus with a community context?
9. What are your expectations of the *Sons of Nehemiah* study?
10. How can I best help you improve your skills as a pastor revitalizer?

## **Appendix L**

### **Interview Questions for Chairman of Deacons of Sons of Nehemiah Churches**

Interview the chairman of deacons of each of the *Sons of Nehemiah* churches to gather qualitative data regarding the present state of the church from their perspective, asking the following questions:

1. In your opinion, what brought the church to this place and time of desperation?
2. What has been the time pattern of decline?
3. Tell me more about the history of the church? Does the church have a written history?
4. Has the church been in chronic conflict, or are the matters that have brought them to this place and time a case of environment and leadership? Explain in detail
5. Why did you choose this pastor revitalizer to be your pastor?
6. Is your present outlook optimistic, or have the people grown complacent and resolved to the potential loss of the church and the legacy?



## **Appendix M**

### **Interview Questions for Legacy Members**

Five legacy members from the church will be sought out with the assistance of the pastor revitalizer. The researcher will ask this diverse group of leaders the same questions that the deacons were asked, including a SWOT analysis. Extended conversations will be had with these legacy leaders, attempting to gather as much data from the wealth of history and insight regarding their pastor and the church, including answers to these questions:

1. What brought the church to this place of decline?
2. What has been the time pattern of decline?
3. Does the church have a written history?
4. Has the church been in chronic conflict, or are the matters that have brought them to this place and time a case of environment and leadership?
5. Why did they choose this pastor revitalizer to be their pastor?
6. Is the church's present outlook optimistic, or have they grown complacent and resolved to the potential loss of the church and the legacy?
7. What, in one minute, would the congregation say has been the greatest joy in the last five years? What has been the greatest disappointment?
8. What is the church doing to assist the pastor in church revitalization?
9. If the church could tell their pastor one thing, in their opinion, that could help move the church forward, what would that statement be?

## **Appendix N**

### **S.W.O.T. Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Of Participating Churches**

Interview the deacons at large regarding the SWOT analysis of their present conditions as a church in revitalization, as well as their opinion of how they are seen by the community at large, asking the following questions (Note: Same questions for legacy members interview):

1. As you look at your church, what do you consider to be her:
  - a. S- trengths
  - b. W-eaknesses
  - c. O-pportunities
  - d. T-hreats
2. When the community looks at your church, what are the four things you would hope they see in your church family?
3. What the four things you think realistically they see regarding your church?

## **Appendix O**

### **Interview Questions for Non-Church Members**

Interview non-church members (two residents, two businesses, and one other church) and ask their opinion and perspective of the church, including their forecast of the church's future, asking the following questions:

1. Are you aware of \_\_\_\_\_ church?
2. If so, what are your observations about \_\_\_\_\_ church?
3. What are three ways a church, including this one, can help your community?
4. What is your opinion, if you could do one thing to change your community, what would it be?

## **Appendix P**

### **Exit Interview Questions for Pastor Revitalizer**

1. As a result of the study, what are four ways you have improved in presenting a compelling vision for your church?
2. As a result of the study, what are four habits you have changed to improve your time management skills as well as setting S.M.A.R.T. goals (Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely) for your work?
3. As a result of the study, what are four ways you have led your church to face the next challenges, and in what ways did they demonstrate the desire to follow?
4. As a result of the study, what are four things you have done to lead your church to know their neighborhood better and become more aware of how to help their community?

## **Appendix Q**

### **Exit Interview Questions for the Chairman of Deacons of the Sons of Nehemiah**

1. As a result of the study, what are four ways your pastor has improved in developing and communicating a compelling vision to the church ?
2. As a result of the study, what are four ways your pastor has improved regarding his management skills of people and time management as well as establishing S.M.A.R.T. goals (Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely)?
3. As a result of the study, what are four ways your pastor has demonstrated stronger passion from the pulpit and his leadership demeanor?
4. As a result of the study, what are four things you have learned about the church's community, and how your church can make a difference?

## **Section Two: Quantitative Data:**

### **Appendix R**

#### **Annual Church Profiles of Participant Churches (2015-2019)**

1. **Son One**, RBC: Suburban Church of One Hundred in Average Attendance
2. **Son Two**, PRBC: Rural/Suburban Church of Fifteen in Average Attendance
3. **Son Three**, COPR: Suburban Church of Thirty in Average Attendance
4. **Son Four**, CHBC: Urban Church of One Hundred in Average Attendance
5. **Son Five**, LBC: Rural Church of Twenty in Average Attendance
6. **Son Six**, ANBC, Suburban Church of Fifteen in Average Attendance
7. **Son Seven**, SBC, Urban Church of Two Hundred Fifty in Average Attendance
8. **Son Eight**, GNFBC, Rural Church of Fifty in Average Attendance
9. **Son Nine**, SJBC, Suburban Church of One Hundred Thirty in Average Attendance
10. **Son Ten**, SCBC, Rural Church of Ten in Average Attendance

## **Appendix S**

### **Demographics / Psychographics of Participant Churches**

1. **Son One**, RBC: Suburban Church of One Hundred in Average Attendance
2. **Son Two**, PRBC: Rural/Suburban Church of Fifteen in Average Attendance
3. **Son Three**, COPR: Suburban Church of Thirty in Average Attendance
4. **Son Four**, CHBC: Urban Church of One Hundred in Average Attendance
5. **Son Five**, LBC: Rural Church of Twenty in Average Attendance
6. **Son Six**, ANBC, Suburban Church of Fifteen in Average Attendance
7. **Son Seven**, SBC, Urban Church of Two Hundred Fifty in Average Attendance
8. **Son Eight**, GNFBC, Rural Church of Fifty in Average Attendance
9. **Son Nine**, SJBC, Suburban Church of One Hundred Thirty in Average Attendance
10. **Son Ten**, SCBC, Rural Church of Ten in Average Attendance

## Appendix T

### Latest Census Data and Overall Marketing Data from the Montgomery Census<sup>132</sup>

#### Montgomery, AL

Place in: Montgomery County, AL, Montgomery, AL Metro Area, Alabama, United States

**198,525** Population

**159.9** square miles **1,241.7** people per square mile

**Census data:** ACS 2019 1-year unless noted

#### Demographics

##### Age

**35.6** Median age

- **about 90 percent** of the figure in the Montgomery, AL Metro Area: 38.2
- **about 90 percent** of the figure in Alabama: 39.4

##### Population by age range

**13%** 0-9 **14%** 10-19 **14%** 20-29 **13%** 30-39 **13%** 40-49 **11%** 50-59 **11%** 60-69 **7%** 70-79 **3%** 80+

##### Population by age category

18 to 64 **60%**

- Under 18
- 18 to 64
- 65 and over

##### Sex

Female **53%**

- Male
- Female

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<sup>132</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2018), *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*, retrieved from *Census Reporter Profile Page for Montgomery, AL*, <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US0151000-montgomery-al>.



## Race & Ethnicity

**31% White 60% Black 0%<sup>†</sup> Native 3% Asian 0% Islander 0%<sup>†</sup> Other 2%<sup>†</sup> Two+ 4% Hispanic**

\* Hispanic includes respondents of any race. Other categories are non-Hispanic.; ACS 2018 5-year data

## Economics

### Income

**\$27,861** Per capita income

- **a little less** than the amount in the Montgomery, AL Metro Area: \$29,094
- **a little less** than the amount in Alabama: \$28,650

**\$51,074** Median household income

- **a little less** than the amount in the Montgomery, AL Metro Area: \$53,834
- **about the same as** the amount in Alabama: \$51,734

### Household income

**49% Under \$50K 31%<sup>†</sup> \$50K - \$100K 16%<sup>†</sup> \$100K - \$200K 4%<sup>†</sup> Over \$200K**

### Poverty

**16.1%** Persons below poverty line

- **about 10 percent higher** than the rate in the Montgomery, AL Metro Area: 14.2%<sup>†</sup>
- **a little higher** than the rate in Alabama: 15.5%

### Children (Under 18)

Poverty **22%**<sup>†</sup>

- Poverty
- Non-poverty

### Seniors (65 and over)

Poverty **12%**<sup>†</sup>

- Poverty
- Non-poverty

## Transportation to work

**19.7 minutes** Mean travel time to work

- **about 90 percent** of the figure in the Montgomery, AL Metro Area: 22.6
- **about 80 percent** of the figure in Alabama: 25.4

## Means of transportation to work

**84%** Drove alone **9%**† Carpooled **0%**† Public transit **0%**† Bicycle **1%**† Walked  
**0%**† Other **4%**† Worked at home

\* Universe: Workers 16 years and over

## Families

### Households

**78,225** Number of households

- **the Montgomery, AL Metro Area:** 145,250
- **Alabama:** 1,897,576

**2.5** Persons per household

- **about the same as** the figure in the Montgomery, AL Metro Area: 2.5
- **a little less** than the figure in Alabama: 2.5

## Population by household type

Married couples **44%**

- Married couples
- Male householder
- Female householder
- Non-family

## Marital status

Married **39%**

- Married
- Single

\* Universe: Population 15 years and over

Marital status, by sex

**Never married** Male 47% Female 38%

**Now married** Male 41% Female 37%

**Divorced** Male 10% Female 18%

**Widowed** Male 2% Female 7%

Fertility

**4.2%** Women 15-50 who gave birth during past year

- **about 90 percent** of the rate in the Montgomery, AL Metro Area: 4.8%
- **about 80 percent** of the rate in Alabama: 5.1%

Women who gave birth during past year, by age group

**5%** 15-19 **8%** 20-24 **10%** 25-29 **4%** 30-35 **2%** 35-39 **0%** 40-44 **0%** 45-50

\* Universe: Women 15 to 50 years

## Housing

Units & Occupancy

**93,166** Number of housing units

- **the Montgomery, AL Metro Area:** 168,417
- **Alabama:** 2,284,922

Occupied vs. Vacant

Occupied **84%**

- Occupied
- Vacant

Ownership of occupied units

Owner occupied **54%**

- Owner occupied
- Renter occupied

Types of structure

Single unit **72%**

- Single unit

- Multi-unit
- Mobile home
- Boat, RV, van, etc.

Year moved in, by percentage of population

Value

**\$125,000** Median value of owner-occupied housing units

- **about 80 percent** of the amount in the Montgomery, AL Metro Area: \$149,500
- **about 80 percent** of the amount in Alabama: \$154,000

Value of owner-occupied housing units

**37%** Under \$100K **38%** \$100K - \$200K **13%** \$200K - \$300K **7%** \$300K - \$400K **3%** \$400K - \$500K **2%** \$500K - \$1M **0%** Over \$1M

Geographical mobility

**22.6%** Moved since previous year

- **about 25 percent higher** than the rate in the Montgomery, AL Metro Area: 18.4% <sup>†</sup>
- **more than 1.5 times** the rate in Alabama: 13.4%

Population migration since previous year

**77%** Same house year ago **14%** From same county **3%** From different county **5%** From different state **1%** From abroad

## Social

Educational attainment

**89.1%** High school grad or higher

- **about the same as** the rate in the Montgomery, AL Metro Area: 89.2%
- **about the same as** the rate in Alabama: 87.1%

**34.6%** Bachelor's degree or higher

- **about 10 percent higher** than the rate in the Montgomery, AL Metro Area: 31.2%
- **about 1.3 times** the rate in Alabama: 26.4%

Population by minimum level of education

**11%** No degree **24%** High school **30%** Some college **20%** Bachelor's **15%** Post-grad

\* Universe: Population 25 years and over

## Language

N/A Persons with language other than English spoken at home\* ACS 2018 5-year data

Language at home, children 5-17

English only **92%**

- English only
- Spanish
- Indo-European
- Asian/Islander
- Other

Language at home, adults 18+

English only **94%**

- English only
- Spanish
- Indo-European
- Asian/Islander
- Other

Place of birth

**4.6%** Foreign-born population

- **about 25 percent higher** than the rate in the Montgomery, AL Metro Area: 3.7% <sup>†</sup>
- **about 1.3 times** the rate in Alabama: 3.6%

Place of birth for foreign-born population

**10%** Europe **48%** Asia **11%**† Africa **1%**† Oceania **29%** Latin America **2%**† North America

\* ACS 2018 5-year data

Veteran status

**9.7%** Population with veteran status

- **a little less** than the rate in the Montgomery, AL Metro Area: 9.9%
- **about 20 percent higher** than the rate in Alabama: 8.4%

Vietnam: **3,840**

- **about two-fifths** of the figure in the Montgomery, AL Metro Area: 9,038
- **less than 10 percent** of the figure in Alabama: 113,331

Veterans by wartime service

**249** WWII **467** Korea **3,840** Vietnam **4,363** Gulf (1990s) **4,474** Gulf (2001-)

\* Civilian veterans who served during wartime only

**14,237** Total veterans **10,576** Male **3,661** Female

## Appendix U

### Pre-Assessment Template Website for Replanters (NAMB)

[https://training.sendnetwork.com/library/replanter-pre-assessment/register/106923/?ic=eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJpbnZpdGVfdHlwZSI6MSwic2Nob29sX2lkIjo4NjksLCJzZW5kZXJfaWQiOjg0Mjk1NCwib2ZmZXJpbmdfaWQiOjEwNjkyMywicm9sZSI6NX0.toozUi\\_V4BFLHI0-JwQpogBkN5XTtU1tj2hg4NIYNvs](https://training.sendnetwork.com/library/replanter-pre-assessment/register/106923/?ic=eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJpbnZpdGVfdHlwZSI6MSwic2Nob29sX2lkIjo4NjksLCJzZW5kZXJfaWQiOjg0Mjk1NCwib2ZmZXJpbmdfaWQiOjEwNjkyMywicm9sZSI6NX0.toozUi_V4BFLHI0-JwQpogBkN5XTtU1tj2hg4NIYNvs)

## Appendix V

### Pre-Assessment Template for Pastor Revitalizers (HUGHES)

#### Church Revitalizer Assessment

Montgomery Baptist Association of Churches  
Montgomery, Alabama

#### Introduction

To pursue the effective preaching of the word, the pursuit of godliness and the persistence of one's calling, the Montgomery Baptist Association has designed an assessment for the church in need of revitalization to use when interviewing a pastor/church revitalizer candidate. It comes with measurable outcomes and a suggestive conclusion. The guide will assist the search team toward an appropriate choice to lead their church in spiritual wellness.

#### Church Revitalizer Assessment

The review of the candidate reflects four core assessments: (1) the experience of the candidate; (2) the personality of the candidate; (3) the character of the candidate; (4) the ability of the candidate. When taking the assessment of forty core competencies, the assessor should see the scoring rate on a scale of 0-5, with one being what least reflects the candidate and 5 being what best reflects the candidate (Note "0" indicates the assessor doesn't know the answer or the revitalizer doesn't have the skill in question).

The assessor taking the appraisal should do it quickly, as it should reflect his first thoughts, enabling an honest review. The assessment should also be done by four others who are references in the revitalizer candidate's biographical (or others who may know the person well). A total of five assessments, including the revitalizer, should give an accurate review.

#### Cumulative Score

The cumulative score becomes the average of each category of all who participated in the assessment exercise, and then the total average from each category (see page 6). Once scored, the following chart can serve as a guide toward your recommendation to proceed with the candidate:

<b><u>Coaching Chart</u></b>	
0.0 – 3.0	Not Recommended
3.1 – 4.0	Recommend with Caution
4.1 - 5.0	Recommend



## Final Instructions

Hand the assessor only the 40 core competencies and not the first or last page (for your use only). Explain the scale as well as the “0” meaning, as stated in assessment explanation.

### The Experience of the Candidate

1. The pastor candidate has at least five years’ experience as a revitalizer, and has revitalized a former church in the demographic (i.e. urban, suburban, town and country, rural, etc.) he is presently seeking to become a pastor.

**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**

2. The revitalizer has ample education to support his work as a pastor and church revitalizer (i.e., seminary, seminars/certifications in revitalization, etc.).

**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**

3. The candidate is credentialed by the North American Mission Board as a church revitalizer and regularly participates in their coaching pipeline.

**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**

4. The revitalizer is presently a Southern Baptist pastor and endorses SBC’s *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* (<http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>).

**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**

5. The revitalizer has experience in dealing with church conflict, which has led to a positive resolution within the congregation.

**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**

6. The revitalizer is seen as one with maturity, with experience in controlling his anger when confronted, and relating to other people without being self-centered and manipulative.

**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**

7. The revitalizer has experience which has led to a renewal of the church he pastored, as noted in such measurables as larger attendance, a healthy spirit rather than a toxic spirit, an intentional community ministry strategy, a stabilized or larger church budget, and a dramatic increase in baptisms.

**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**

8. The revitalizer has experience leading the church through projects that have produced an evangelistic spirit which remains today with disciples who make disciples.

**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**

9. The revitalizer has multi-staff experience and is seen by his paid and volunteer staff as a high capacity leader.

**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**

10. The revitalizer is seen as an experienced servant leader, knowing that the first shall be last, who reflects a humble attitude, and demonstrates a “whatever it takes” spirit.  
**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**

“The Experience of the Candidate” Cumulative Score Average: \_\_\_\_\_

### The Personality of the Candidate

1. The revitalizer is seen by others as engaging and friendly.  
**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**
2. The revitalizer seeks to build relationships with others and is seen as approachable to all members of the congregation, not just some.  
**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**
3. The revitalizer can handle many tasks and not be frayed, ill-tempered, or in distress.  
**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**
4. The revitalizer is not only able to do the work, but is capable of delegating the work.  
**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**
5. The revitalizer leads with contagious passion, as reflected in his engaging personality.  
**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**
6. The revitalizer typically prefers to be with people rather than be in his office.  
**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**
7. The revitalizer has a personality that is engaging to lost people from the community and is seen as one who attracts them to the church.  
**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**
8. The revitalizer is kind to his wife and children, which is commonly seen by the congregation and others in many settings.  
**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**
9. The revitalizer is seen for his generosity, giving away his time, talents, and treasure for kingdom living.  
**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**
10. The revitalizer is sensitive to older people, showing respect and kindness to the legacy generation.  
**Least Reflects Candidate**    0    1    2    3    4    5    **Best Reflects Candidate**

**“The Personality of the Candidate” Cumulative Score Average: \_\_\_\_\_**

### **The Character of the Candidate**

1. The revitalizer is seen as one who has an intimate prayer life as well as a person of spiritual discipline who grows in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
2. The revitalizer is seen as an ambassador for Christ who leads the church from his knees.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
3. The revitalizer is known by others as a “Micah 6:8” person: one who acts justly, loves mercy, and walks humbly with God.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
4. The revitalizer is confessional in his messages, speaking transparently of his own weaknesses and the Lord’s strength, who also speaks to the church’s need of repentance and seeking God to bring new life to their congregation.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
5. The revitalizer has a strong work ethic, being the first to come and the last to leave, being an early riser, and being one who works as much (if not more) than those in his congregation who have vocations.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
6. The revitalizer is seen as faithful to his spouse and is known in the community as one who deeply loves his family.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
7. The revitalizer abides by scripture’s 1 Timothy 3 ethic for spiritual leaders and is seen in the community as a holy man of God (2 Kings 4:9).  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
8. The revitalizer is quick to forgive as well as to seek forgiveness and reconciliation.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
9. The revitalizer is known as a tither, giving sacrificially to the church and kingdom needs.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
10. The revitalizer is an abstainer of alcohol as well as other enhancing substances, and he preaches the value of not causing someone to stumble by participating in such habits.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***

**“The Character of the Candidate” Cumulative Score Average: \_\_\_\_\_**

**The Ability of the Candidate**

1. The revitalizer can cast a compelling vision that people want to follow.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
2. The revitalizer has a contagious passion that people seek after in shaping their own lives.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
3. The revitalizer can missionally exegete his community, understand demographics, and organize an evangelistic strategy to reach his neighborhood for Jesus Christ.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
4. The revitalizer is a personal soul winner and is known as one who boldly shares his faith regularly in his community.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
5. The revitalizer can communicate the word of God effectively and in a timely manner, which is engaging and applicable to his audience.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
6. The revitalizer is known for bringing biblical messages Sunday after Sunday and demonstrates that he is a faithful expositor of the word, having spent much time in study and preparation preceding his message.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
7. The revitalizer is seen as a strong administrator, able to organize effectively, manage the church appropriately, conduct meetings well, direct people with confidence, and handle the spiritual needs of the people as well as the physical needs of an older church building.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
8. The revitalizer has a strong understanding of church finances, reads financial statements well, and can lead the church with his knowledge of biblical stewardship.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
9. The revitalizer’s family finances are sound, and his credit and reputation for paying his bills promptly are in excellent order.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***
10. The revitalizer is an apologist of the word of God, speaking the truth of scripture to those who attempt to find answers in culture, tradition, and preferences rather than the bible.  
***Least Reflects Candidate   0   1   2   3   4   5   Best Reflects Candidate***

**“The Ability of the Candidate” Cumulative Score Average: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Cumulative Grading Page from All Assessments**  
*For Facilitator of Assessment Testing Only*

Total Cumulative Averages from ALL Five Assessments Given to Assessors:

1. “The Experience” Cumulative Score Average from Five Assessments: \_\_\_\_\_
2. “The Personality” Cumulative Score Average from Five Assessments: \_\_\_\_\_
3. “The Character” Cumulative Score Average from Five Assessments: \_\_\_\_\_
4. “The Ability” Cumulative Score Average from Five Assessments: \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Cumulative Average Revitalizer Assessment Score: \_\_\_\_\_**

*(Total cumulative averages of five assessments divided by 4 = total average revitalizer assessment score)*

**Coaching Chart**

0.0 – 3.0	Not Recommended
3.1 – 4.0	Recommend with Caution
4.1 - 5.0	Recommend

**Revitalizer Pre-Assessment Bibliography**

Davis, Andrew M. *Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017.

Getz, Gene A. “Determining a Candidates’ Maturity Quotient.” *Elders and Leaders: God’s Plan For Leading the Church*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003.

Mathis, Gary and Mark Donnell. *Show-Me Health: Vital Signs of a Healthy Church*. Missouri Baptists: [www.mobaptist.org/church-health-assessment-tool](http://www.mobaptist.org/church-health-assessment-tool), 2015.

Sanders, Oswald J. *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007.

*The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message*. Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention. Adopted June 14, 2000: <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>

**Montgomery Baptist Association Pastor Revitalizer Assessment (Sons of Nehemiah)**  
Coaching Chart (0.0-3.0- Not Recommended; 3.1-4.0, Recommend with Caution; 4.1-5.0, Recommend)

SON 1, RBC- N/A

SON 2, PRBC- 4.2 (Recommend)

SON 3, COPR- 4.3 (Recommend)

SON 4, CHBC- 4.3 (Recommend)

SON 5, LBC- 3.3 (Recommend with Caution)

SON 6, ANBC- N/A

SON 7, SBC- 4.1 (Recommend)

SON 8, GNFBC- 3.9 (Recommend with Caution)

SON 9, SJBC- N/A

SON 10, SCBC- 4.8 (Recommend)

## **Appendix W**

### **DISC Profiles of the Sons of Nehemiah**

#### **DISC Assessment of the Sons of Nehemiah D-ominant, I-nfluence, S-teadiness, C-onscientious**

SON 1, RBC- N/A

SON 2, PRBC- N/A

SON 3, COPR- N/A

SON 4, CHBC- Csi

SON 5, LBC- Cs

SON 6, ANBC- N/A

SON 7, SBC- Sc

SON 8, GNFBC- Sci

SON 9, SJBC- N/A

SON 10, SCBC- N/A

## Appendix X

### *Sons of Nehemiah: Implementation Phase of the Thesis Project*

A. **Phase One:** Recruitment of Ten Pastor Revitalizers and their Churches for the Study  
(July 1 to July 11, 2020)

B. **Phase Two:** Intervention Section of the Study: “Look, Think, and Act”  
(July 12 to August 31, 2020)

❖ Interviews and Focus Groups with all Parties (July 12 to July 19, 2020)

❖ Sons of Nehemiah Orientation and Assessments (July 20, 6 pm to 7:30 pm)

- DISC Profile / NAMB Pre-Assessment Discussion

- Homework: Revitalize Conference- Dr. Michael Rubino, D.A. Horton, Dr. Gregg Farah (*Introduction, Gospel Clarity and Church Revitalization, Take the Jesus Challenge*)

- Personal coaching conversation weekly between researcher and pastor revitalizer

❖ Sons of Nehemiah Meeting One (July 27, 6 pm to 7:30 pm)

- Topic of Discussion: Having a Creative Vision

- Homework: Revitalize Conference- Mark Clifton, Dr. Sam Rainer (*Replanting Pathways, Leading Other When You Doubt Yourself*)

❖ Sons of Nehemiah Meeting Two (August 3, 6 pm to 7:30 pm)

- Topic of Discussion: Having a Devoted and Strategic Work Ethic

- Homework: Revitalize Conference- George Russ, Micah Fries (*Finding the Leaders You Need, Leveling the Church*)

❖ Sons of Nehemiah Meeting Three (August 10, 6 pm to 7:30 pm)



- Topic of Discussion: Having a Contagious Passion
- Homework: Revitalize Conference- Dr. Gary Moritz, Dr. Andy Davis (*Tactical Strategies Toward Revitalization, The Importance of Theology in Revitalization*)
- ❖ Sons of Nehemiah Meeting Four (August 17, 6 pm to 7:30 pm)
  - Topic of Discussion: Having a Kingdom Focus in Ministry Context
  - Homework: Revitalize Conference- Karl Vaters, DA Horton (*Leading Through Crisis: The Only Wy Out Is Up, Breaking Down Walls to Build up the Church*)
- ❖ Sons of Nehemiah Meeting Five (August 24, 6 pm to 7:30 pm)
  - Open Mic Night on Church Revitalization
  - Homework: Revitalize Conference- Joel Wayne, Speakers Panel (*The Awakening Coalition & Cohort Coaching, Speakers Panel*)
- ❖ Sons of Nehemiah Meeting Six- Graduation (August 31, 6 pm to 7:30 pm)
  - Commencement Virtual Speaker Dr. Gary Moritz, Lead Pastor, City United Church, Lunenburg, Massachusetts
  - Reception
- C. **Phase Three:** Implementation Section of the Study: Analysis Review with Exit Interviews (September 1 to September 30, 2020)

## Appendix Y

### IRB Approval Letter

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 25, 2020

Donald Hughes

Gary Moritz

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY19-20-405 Sons of Nehemiah: Raising the Level of Leadership in Ten Pastor Revitalizers of the Montgomery Baptist Association

Dear Donald Hughes, Gary Moritz:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

101(b):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent forms can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. These forms should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent documents should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**

*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*

**Research Ethics Office**